FEBRUARY 12, 2001

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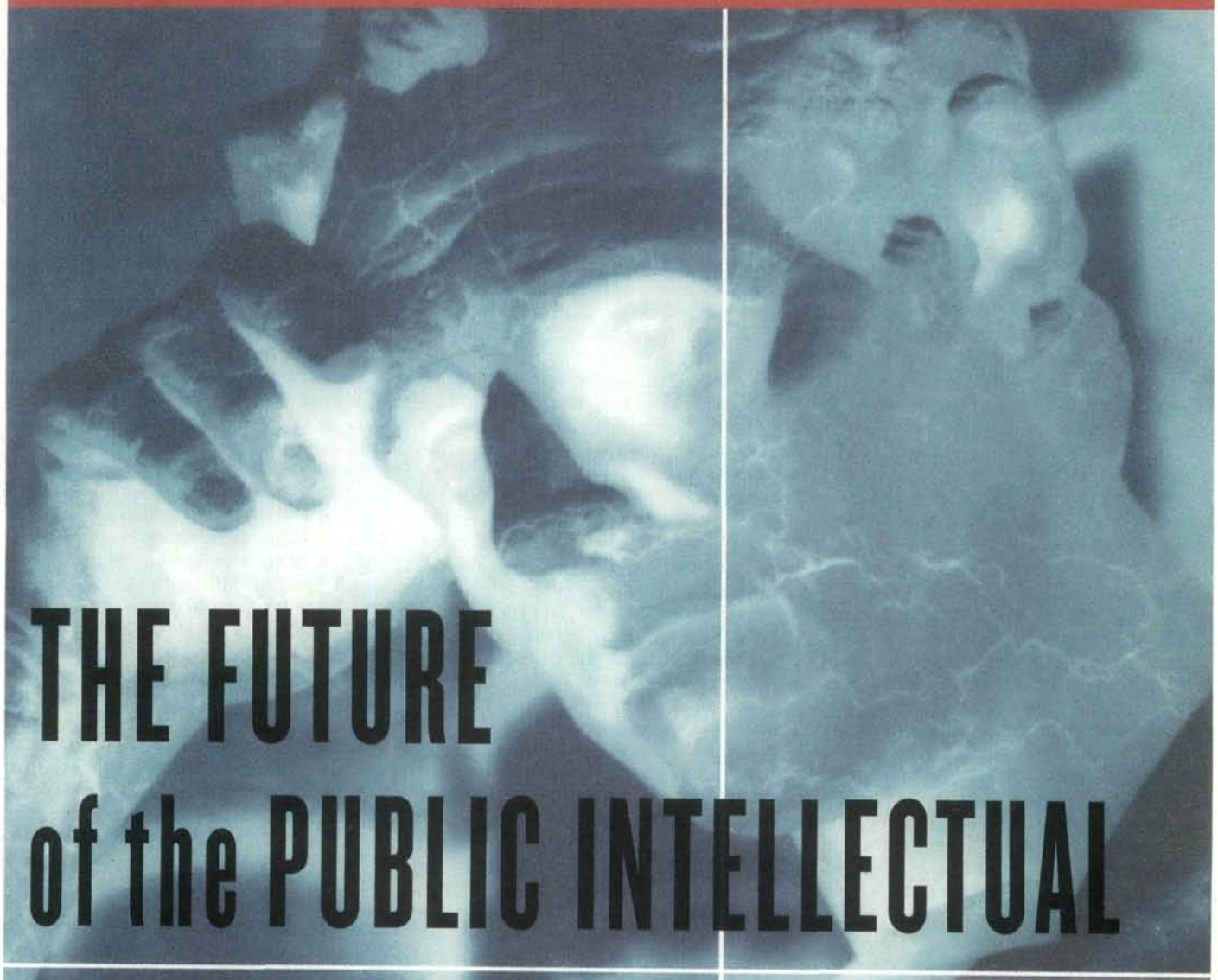

THE FUTURE of the PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

A FORUM

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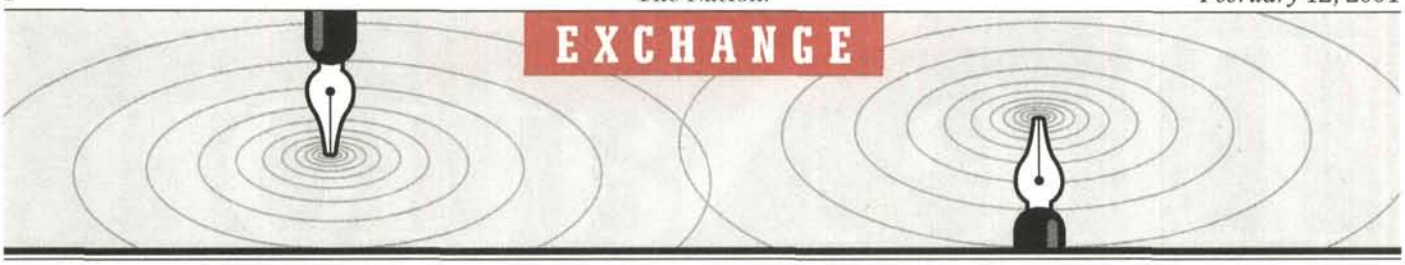

Coming of Age in the NSA?

Katonah, N.Y.

■ David Price's "Anthropologists as Spies" [Nov. 20] is a timely and important article because historians of anthropology seem to have collective amnesia concerning the intersection of anthropological scholarship and politics. Identified by Laura Nader as the "phantom factor," anthropologists all too often fail to acknowledge our intellectual forefathers and that many of our longstanding traditions were profoundly influenced by government institutions. This is all the more remarkable given the fact that anthropologists have traditionally worked among disfranchised groups and supposedly championed those cultures that have suffered because of the "progress" of Western civilization. Thus, rather than being the voice of the disfranchised, too many anthropologists have used the science of man as a handmaiden for the power of the state.

The sooner anthropologists recognize the as yet unwritten history of their work as spies the better. Price's article is a step in the right direction, but much more needs to be done. This is especially true in light of the recent publication of Patrick Tierney's controversial book *Darkness in El Dorado*. While it is one thing to recognize our past mistakes, it is incumbent upon anthropologists and the American Anthropological Association to take actions to prevent them from happening again. I believe that any anthropologist who knowingly works for a US intelligence agency such as the FBI or CIA and uses his or her position or fieldwork as a cover for covert actions should be sanctioned by the AAA. This is not an original idea, nor is it my own—Franz Boas suggested it in 1919. The result? He was censured by the AAA. If anthropologists do not impose sanctions against covert research are we not giving tacit approval for these studies? And equally important, how can we expect the people we are supposed to be studying to believe anything we say? WILLIAM J. PEACE

Pacific Palisades, Calif.

■ David Price puts anthropologists doing undercover spying for the government together with anthropologists choosing to work openly for the government or organizations funded by the government. Without question it is reprehensible when an anthropologist goes into the field professing to be doing only a specific scholarly study but at the same time secretly gathering information for government agencies having nothing to do with his professed study. That is spying.

Price goes beyond this, however, when he makes the assertion that "some of the same anthropologists who spied during World War I did so in the next war" and then gives as examples: "During the early cold war Ruth Benedict and lesser-known colleagues worked for the RAND corporation and the Office of Naval Research." And "in the Vietnam War, anthropologists worked on projects with strategic military applications."

It is ludicrous to accuse Benedict of being a spy when she was simply a consultant on some RAND research projects. RAND is not a spy organization. I worked there for thirteen years (1956 to 1969) and do not know of any staff member that played the role of spy. Gerald Hickey, an American anthropologist, did research on the aboriginal peoples living in the highlands of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War as a RAND consultant, but he did so openly, not covertly. He has published his findings in a two-volume work—*Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands*—published by Yale University Press in 1982.

This brings up an important ethical issue, not discussed by Price, that must be faced by all anthropologists once their fieldwork findings have been published: They lose all control as to how their findings will be used by anyone. And no matter how careful anthropologists may be in writing up their findings, they cannot predict how their findings will be used, whether to help or to hinder the people being studied. I have had to face this ethical issue as a research anthropologist during the many years I have spent studying male homosexual behaviors in Mexico. It is my belief that anthropologists have the right to choose their research topic and who sponsors their research but they also have the ethical obligation to do so with regard to the ways their research data may be used by anyone, for or against the people studied, once it is made available to the public.

JOSEPH CARRIER

Shanghai

■ While I appreciate David Price's efforts to expose the historically seedy underbelly of American anthropology, I strongly object to his implication that anthropology graduate students who receive funding from the National Security Education Program are somehow engaged in fieldwork that is a front for espionage or that they will be required to engage in espionage as part of the NSEP's service requirement. As an NSEP fellow currently conducting dissertation research in China, I consider his remarks inaccurate and irresponsible.

One of the post–cold war "peace dividend" programs of the senior Bush Administration, NSEP was created in the early 1990s by an act of Congress. Administered by the Defense Department, the program is similar to the older (and less conspicuously named) Fulbright program: NSEP provides money for research abroad in a wide variety of academic fields. What distinguishes NSEP from Fulbright is that it comes with a service obligation that requires recipients to make a "good faith effort" to find employment in a "security related" government agency within five years of graduation. If they cannot find such employment, they may complete their service agreement through teaching at the college level.

Hmm. Sounds ominous enough to prompt objections from any self-respecting anthropologist. Price, however, leaves out some rather crucial information that makes the NSEPs seem a little less dastardly. First, the strong objections that academics like Price expressed about the program at its inception substantially modified the final product: NSEP scholars are forbidden by law to be employed by any US government intelligence agency while engaged in their research; "security" is defined in the broadest possible terms, including such issues as sustainable development and human rights; NSEP scholars fulfill the requirement to work for the government simply by posting their résumé to the NSEP website (beyond that, they are neither assisted in finding government work nor compelled to do so); only a tiny percentage of the research funded by NSEP in the past five years has explicit links to security issues; and "security-related agencies" include more than twenty Congressional subcommittees, the International Trade Office and the Treasury Department, among others.

Price's remarks do something far worse than paint an inaccurate picture: They also endanger NSEP fellows currently in the field, many of whom are conducting research in countries with less than cordial relations with the United States. As with other academic exchange programs, the presence of NSEP fellows is meant to encourage communication and alleviate tensions. The last thing these scholars need is to be associated, through careless remarks, with the US intelligence apparatus. In past years, Peace Corps volunteers and Fulbright scholars have suffered from such bad publicity, sometimes being arrested and expelled from their research countries.

Finally, when I received NSEP funding last spring, I felt a considerable amount of trepidation about accepting the money, not because I felt that it was morally wrong (the CIA and I both know that I don't work for the CIA) but because I knew that in a year or two I would be seeking jobs in anthropology departments where

(Continued on Page 23)

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EDITORIALS

Bush's True Colors

Throughout the last campaign, while liberal Democrats warned that Bush was much more reactionary than he pretended to be, Naderites argued that Democrats were much less progressive than their rhetoric. From the evidence of the first days of the Bush Administration, it turns out both were right.

For all the dulcet compassion written into his inaugural address, Bush turned right even before entering the White House. His nomination of John Ashcroft as Attorney General showed contempt, not compassion, for the broad center of American politics. His environmental troika—Norton, Abraham and Whitman—are an affront even to Republican environmentalists. While professing her love for nature Norton preposterously invoked the California power crisis as a reason to start drilling in the Arctic wildlife preserve. The troika also threatened a review of the environmental regulations Clinton issued in his last weeks in power.

On his first day in office Bush targeted women's right to choose by reinstating the odious gag rule defunding any international organization that counsels women abroad on family planning and abortion. He also opened fire on women's rights at home, announcing that "it is my conviction that taxpayer funds should not be used to pay for abortions or advocate or actively promote abortions either here or abroad." He hailed those gathered at the annual national protest against *Roe v. Wade*, saying that "we share a great goal" in overturning the constitutional protection of a woman's right to seek an abortion. And Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson announced that he would review RU-486, which anti-choicers want banned, fearful that it will make abortion more accessible. So much for compassion.

Bush launched his push for an education plan that will demand lots of testing in exchange for a little new funding for beleaguered urban and rural schools. The $5 billion annual price tag for his education bill is mocked by the $68 billion annual tax cut he wants to give to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans—to say nothing of the tens of billions about to be thrown at the Pentagon. But Bush knows what he calls "my base." The lily-white, mink-draped crowd at his inauguration broke into loud applause only twice: when Bush promised to reduce taxes and when Chief Justice Rehnquist was introduced. So much for bipartisanship.

Yet, despite the stolen election, the wolf politics after a sheep's campaign and a furious and frightened constituency, many Democrats in the Senate seem content with getting rolled. Conservatives in the party didn't pause before trampling their leaders to embrace the tainted President. While Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle was urging his troops to hold off on any announcements about Ashcroft, the opportunistic Robert Torricelli and dubious Democrat Zell Miller of Georgia were hailing the Missouri tribune of the Confederacy as Attorney General. Despite a furious reaction by Democrats across the country, opponents like Ted Kennedy are struggling to summon even forty votes against a zealot whose career has been marked by his willingness to abuse his office for political gain. While Daschle was trying to get some agreement on a smaller tax-cut package from Democrats, Miller leapt in to co-sponsor the equivalent of the Bush plan with Texas Senator Phil Gramm.

Dick Cheney's former opponent, Joe Lieberman, didn't even thank African-Americans and the unions for their remarkable support this past fall before kicking them in the teeth in January. He joined nine other New Democrats in an unctuous letter to "President-Elect Bush" indicating their willingness to work with him on an education bill and urging him to make a top priority of the fight for "Fast Track trading authority" for "expansion of trade in the Americas." Lieberman et al. begged to meet with Bush as early as possible. So much for Democratic unity.

But the Democratic collaborators are likely misjudging the temper of the country. What the inaugural also revealed was

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COMMENT

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the depth of voter anger nationwide. Demonstrators often outnumbered celebrators along the parade route. And from San Francisco to Kansas City to Tallahassee, citizens turned out to express their dismay at the installation of the illegitimate President. Bush seems committed to refighting old battles against choice, affirmative action and environmental and consumer protection, as well as to waging a new offensive in the continuing class warfare of the privileged against the poor. But citizens are showing that they are ready to resist. Some Democrats—Maxine Waters, Dennis Kucinich, Jan Schakowsky, Barney Frank, George Miller and others in the House, as well as Kennedy and Richard Durbin in the Senate—are already engaged. The day before Bush was sworn in, the Progressive Caucus led a daylong conference on political reform that featured a bold agenda and a promise to push for change at the state and national levels. In the coming fray, Democrats who decide to cozy up to the new Administration are likely to find themselves caught in the crossfire.

COMMENT

Democrats Play Softball

On Day Two of the John Ashcroft hearings, Senator Pat Leahy—the Democrat temporarily chairing the Senate Judiciary Committee—asked George W. Bush's would-be Attorney General if he had blocked the nomination of businessman James Hormel to be ambassador to Luxembourg because Hormel is gay. Ashcroft replied, "I did not." He had quashed the nomination, Ashcroft contended, because of "the totality of the record." Actually, at the time of the Hormel controversy, Ashcroft's remarks indicated that Hormel's sexual orientation was crucial to his decision ("He's been a leader in promoting a lifestyle.... And the kind of leadership he's exhibited there is likely to be offensive.") Leahy could have challenged the ex-senator's honesty. He could have demanded that Ashcroft cite a reason beyond "lifestyle" for his opposition. Leahy had Ashcroft in his sights, but he didn't pull the trigger.

That moment was telling. Despite the right-wing rhetoric that Democrats are bent on a so-called politics of personal destruction, Senate Democrats did not slam Ashcroft as hard as they could have. For example, they didn't query him about his meeting with a leader of the racist Council of Conservative Citizens to discuss whether Ashcroft could help an imprisoned CCC member accused of conspiring to murder an FBI agent. At the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Democrats permitted designated Interior Secretary Gale Norton to slip-slide through her confirmation hearing. When she testified that "there is beginning to be more of a consensus" that global warming is under way but that there is "still disagreement as to the causes and the long-term future" of global warming, no Democrat pounced on her for mischaracterizing the current consensus among scientists that global warming is human-induced and presents a threat.

For Ashcroft and Norton, the Democrats mounted hearings designed to slap the nominees but not to defeat them. Ted Kennedy, Chuck Schumer, Richard Durbin and Joe Biden did question

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Ashcroft sharply. The testimony of Missouri Supreme Court Judge Ronnie White reinforced charges that Ashcroft—who had assailed White as "procriminal"—had waged a dishonest, intemperate and unfair campaign against this barrier-breaking African-American jurist. But overall, the Democrats weren't really gunning for Ashcroft or Norton—which can be seen as an indicator of how they intend to behave as the opposition.

It may be that their leaders decided that these were battles that could not be won, so why go all out? Senator Russell Feingold, a progressive, announced that as a matter of principle a President should be accorded his nominees. Several other Democrats—like the conservative Zell Miller—signaled that they would vote for Ashcroft, and Norton drew even less visible opposition. Clearly, some Democratic senators were wary of being tagged as underminers of the much-ballyhooed bipartisanship. The hard reality: With the Senate split 50-50, a single Democratic Senator can undo his or her party's position by threatening to bolt. Faced with these two way-out nominations, Senate Democrats—despite being pressed by key constituencies, as well as the Congressional Black Caucus—could not maintain a united opposition.

After the Ashcroft hearings, leaders of the anti-Ashcroft campaign criticized the Democrats, in private, for their lack of fierce effectiveness. "The Democrats have to learn how to fight to win," one of the coalition leaders complained. "Trying to achieve fairness is great. But you also have to be willing to play hardball. You didn't have good cross-examination during the hearings." The Democrats on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee disappointed the enviros opposing Norton. "It was very frustrating," said an environmental lobbyist. "Bush sends up this extremist, and the Democrats did not push back—or even send a loud message that we don't want her screwing around with laws that protect the environment." But several forgive-and-forget Senate Democrats are not interested in a fight with Bush, and that will hobble any attempt on the part of Congressional Democrats to mount a coherent anti-Bush front. And where's the Democrats' alternative-to-Bush agenda? Congressional Democrats include those eager to cooperate with the President and also those who want to trounce the Filcher of Florida. Bush the "uniter" is so far doing well in dividing the Democrats. DAVID CORN

Pacifica—A Way Out

The following is another in a series of reports and opinion pieces on events at Pacifica. We welcome comments from readers and remain committed to airing diverse points of view. —The Editors

The "Christmas coup" at New York's WBAI-FM radio, in which Pacifica management changed the locks in the middle of the night, just hours before summarily firing three longtime station employees, marks another dismal turn of events in the recent history of America's pre-eminent network of community radio stations. *Nation* readers no doubt recall the lockout at Pacifica's KPFA-FM in Berkeley in 1999. In that case, virtually the entire KPFA community of listeners and staff organized against the lockout, and Pacifica's national management was forced to relent.

It will be more difficult to do that at WBAI. Pacifica management learned an important lesson from the KPFA debacle, which was not to permit the station staff to be united in its opposition. At WBAI, Pacifica's national management chose a well-known program host, Utrice Leid, to replace the fired station manager. Leid has been a visible figure at WBAI over the years and has the support of some on the staff and in the community. (I have been a guest on her WBAI program and have always had an enjoyable time.) She has stated her opposition to censorship and her support for WBAI's traditional values.

Any notion that this was going to be a calm transition exploded on January 23, when Leid restricted access to a WBAI Local Advisory Board meeting at WBAI's offices in lower Manhattan. The LAB is a Corporation for Public Broadcasting requirement, and it has been holding meetings at the WBAI office for the past twenty-five years. When participants in the prospective meeting protested, the police arrested nine people for trespassing.

On the all-powerful eighteen-member Pacifica National Board, a marginalized minority of six opposes the firings at WBAI. One of the six, Leslie Cagan, says that Pacifica executive director Bessie Wash, who quarterbacked the Christmas coup and installed Leid, refuses even to discuss the matter with her. (I tried unsuccessfully to reach Wash and Leid.) In a strongly worded statement on January 18, the dissidents called for a reinstatement of the three fired employees, a return to traditional labor-review practices, a full national board meeting to consider the crisis at WBAI and an end to the high security "martial law" environment at the station. These are fair demands.

What happens at Pacifica is not a minor issue of concern only to those who work at WBAI and the other Pacifica stations, or who live in one of the five Pacifica cities. We all need a healthy and vibrant Pacifica. It is the most widely consumed progressive medium in the United States; it is the basis for a national community radio network; it has considerable potential for growth. For all the talk about the Internet and the digital revolution, radio is the true people's medium. And in the commercial wasteland that US radio has become under deregulation, the prospects for noncommercial radio look better than they have for a very long time.

Nor are the problems at Pacifica anything new; there is a long history of internal squabbles. My general sense from afar was that both sides had their flaws, while opportunism masked by political posturing abounded. But in the past few years matters have changed. The newly aggressive national management has shown minimal respect for fair play or the values of community broadcast and little interest in preserving Pacifica's distinctive dissident and independent political focus.

The authoritarianism at WBAI is highlighted, as it was at KPFA, by the unwillingness of the Pacifica management to speak fully and honestly about its strategies and plans. To the limited extent that Pacifica has attempted to justify its actions at WBAI and KPFA, it has been on the grounds that these stations need to expand their audiences dramatically. I am quite sympathetic to that position [see McChesney, "From Pacifica to the Atlantic," October 11, 1999], but Pacifica's actions do not lend credence to this claim. The attack on WBAI, as on KPFA, seems more about seizing power, with the concerns of

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the audience, existing or potential, nowhere to be found.

This, then, points to the core problem: The management structure at Pacifica is inappropriate for this kind of enterprise. The notion of a self-appointed board of directors having all the legal power makes sense for a small nonprofit group where a small number of people do almost all the labor and strongly influence the board. But at Pacifica this model makes no sense. The Pacifica stations were built up by the staff and listeners over the past fifty years, yet they have hardly any legal power. Many of the current board members have scarcely any prior hands-on involvement with Pacifica and seemingly know little about community radio in theory or practice, yet they hold nearly all the legal cards. That is why their numerous opponents have been reduced to demonstrating, filing long-shot lawsuits and hassling board members in hopes they will quit.

The solution is therefore simple: Revise the legal structure of Pacifica so that it better reflects the actual nature of the five stations and how they do operate, and should operate. Give the staff and listeners more formal power. But the solution is also maddeningly complex. There is no simple way to restructure Pacifica to be democratic and effective and to make everyone happy. Some of those currently disgruntled may never get gruntled.

The proposal developed by numerous people, including FAIR founder Jeff Cohen, seems like the most prudent course: a transitional slate of a dozen highly respected progressive figures should be appointed to the existing board (www.fair.org/press-releases/pacifica-proposal.html). (Disclosure: I was recommended to be on this slate in the original proposal; due to increased obligations, I now cannot accept such a post.) This transitional board would then make a formal study of how Pacifica could be restructured to be more democratic, more relevant and more open to audience expansion, while remaining true to its core values.

This proposal has been endorsed by progressives ranging from Jim Hightower, Michael Moore, Martin Espada, Alice Walker and Studs Terkel to nonprofit media consultant Herb Chao Gunther, foundation president Hari Dillon, Barbara Ehrenreich, June Jordan, Tom Morello, Carlos Muñoz Jr., Jill Nelson, Ramona Ripston and Howard Zinn. The dissident members of Pacifica's national board have called for precisely such a long-term and sweeping reevaluation. As board member Cagan told me, "The lack of democracy within the institution makes it impossible to have any open and honest discussion of the problems facing Pacifica." The plan can be carried out in accordance with Pacifica's current bylaws.

Tragically, as this goes to press, the board majority is moving in the opposite direction. It proposes to revise Pacifica's bylaws so that it will be "very much modeled on a corporate structure, not a nonprofit one," according to Cagan. This would, in effect, destroy Pacifica. The current board members must remember that they do not own Pacifica; it is not their plaything. They should *not* revise the bylaws and should adopt the Cohen proposal. Their legacy would then be that they were responsible for making Pacifica a strong and viable model for community broadcasting and media for the coming decades.

ROBERT W. MCCHESNEY

Robert W. McChesney, who teaches at the University of Illinois, is the author of Rich Media, Poor Democracy *(New Press) and, with John Nichols, of* It's the Media, Stupid *(Seven Stories).*

CALVIN TRILLIN

ADIEU (SORT OF) TO BILL CLINTON

We'd say goodbye to Clinton, Bill,
Who always was a rascal, still
Accomplished much, before he tripped
(He couldn't keep his trousers zipped)
And after, too. His gifts were great.
A farewell toast we'd contemplate,
Except for now we can't believe
That Bill is really going to leave.

Economists vs. Students

For more than two years, the antisweatshop movement has been the hottest political thing on campus [see Featherstone, "The New Student Movement," May 15, 2000]. Students have used sit-ins, rallies, hunger strikes and political theater to demand that garments bearing their institution's logo be made under half-decent working conditions.

From the beginning, the major players were students and administrators. While some progressive faculty members—mostly from sociology departments—offered the students early support, economists, who like to think of their discipline as the queen of the social sciences, kept fairly quiet.

That changed this past July. After colleges and universities made a number of visible concessions to the students over the spring, a group of some 250 economists and lawyers released a letter to administrators, basically complaining that they hadn't been consulted. The letter, initially drafted by Jagdish Bhagwati of Columbia University and burnished to perfection by a collective of free-trade zealots calling themselves the Academic Consortium on International Trade (ACIT), reproached administrators for making concessions "without seeking the views of scholars" in relevant disciplines. Judging from their letter, the views of these scholars might not have been terribly enlightening. On page 24, the ACIT missive appears with some comments.

LIZA FEATHERSTONE AND DOUG HENWOOD

Liza Featherstone is at work on a book about the campus antisweatshop movement, out from Verso later this year. Doug Henwood, editor of Left Business Observer *and a* Nation *contributing editor, is the author of* A New Economy? *forthcoming from Verso.*

(Continued on Page 24)

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In Fact . . .

THE 'MONEY GUY'

Bill Bradley, the former senator and presidential candidate, has smartly stoked nagging doubts among Democrats about coronating mega-fundraiser Terry McAuliffe as party chairman. In a *Washington Post* Op-Ed, Bradley asked, "Will we be the party of campaign finance reform or the party of campaign finance?" The answer is probably the latter, but former Atlanta mayor Maynard Jackson is making an uphill challenge for the Democratic National Committee chairmanship and picking up principled supporters like Bradley. McAuliffe is the party's premier "money guy" and personal financier to Bill Clinton—who wired this deal—so it's likely to prevail despite the sleazy overtones. McAuliffe mixes money and politics, business and policy issues with bipartisan dexterity. He has partnered in real estate, for instance, with Republican Carl Lindner of Chiquita bananas fame—a notorious right-wing moneybag who has generously funded such causes as the National Right to Life Committee and the antiunion "paycheck protection" referendum in California. Where is the rank-and-file outrage? It's muted, because so many party leaders and major constituencies, including organized labor, have done themselves business with McAuliffe. Opponents supporting Maynard Jackson are aware that if they were to go on full attack to block McAuliffe's election, it could provoke a bloody intraparty fight, and they still might not win. Meanwhile, Bradley observes that many voters in 2000 felt "the Democratic Party had betrayed its traditions and become a party that regarded raising money as the highest political value—as the end rather than the means." Did they get that right?

THE UNDESERVING RICH

On the way out the White House door, Bill Clinton added another reason to be skeptical about the unholy symbiosis of money and politics. Of the 176 pardons and commutations he issued at the last moment, one was granted to Marc Rich, the fugitive financier. In 1983 Rich, facing indictment for conducting the largest tax-evasion scheme in US history, fled the country. Ever since, he has fought extradition. A commodities megadealer, he also has been accused of smuggling oil to South Africa during apartheid and of selling embargoed Iraqi oil. Moreover, he was a shady figure in one of the more egregious antilabor actions of the 1990s—the replacement of union workers at an aluminum factory in Ravenswood, West Virginia (see David Corn, "The Search for Marc Rich," February 24, 1992). Since Clinton had no obligation to explain his pardons, what prompted forgiveness for this accused corporate criminal remains a mystery. But here's a hard-to-ignore clue: Rich's ex-wife, Denise Rich, a Manhattan songwriter, has contributed more than $320,000 to the Democrats in the past two years.

HAIL ROBERT RAY (AND FAREWELL!)

Independent counsel Robert Ray's announcement that he will not prosecute William Jefferson Clinton was an act of decency—arguably the first at the OIC since 1994 when Kenneth Starr began hounding his targets with the zeal of Inspector Javert. It was the result of a "plea bargain" that entailed a tightly parsed confession by the former President that he lied in his Paula Jones deposition (never mind that Jones's suit was a gambit engineered by the far right Clinton-haters and thrown out of court). Although his action came seven years too late, Ray deserves credit for ending the national nightmare—though, post-Monica, a more accurate term would be national sex fantasy.

AN SOA BY ANY OTHER NAME...

Mike Owen Benediktsson writes: On December 15 Army officials closed the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, a target of human rights activists because its military graduates went on to become some of Latin America's most infamous war criminals. On January 17 the Army opened the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, which is nothing more than a revamped School of the Americas under a different name and with a different charter. Last May the House Armed Services Committee pushed the changes through a narrowly divided Congress. Democratic opposition was overcome by an intensive lobbying effort from the Army, Pentagon and Clinton Administration. At the closing ceremony for the School of the Americas, Army Secretary Louis Caldera said that those for whom "no amount of reform of this institution could ever redeem it" could now "rejoice that the school is closed." But the same military instructors and Latin American officer-pupils will repeat the same courses in combat, commando tactics and psychological warfare at the new institute. With counterinsurgency no longer fashionable, "counterdrug operations" has been added to the school's mission statement—clever timing, what with a $1.3 billion counterdrug operation now under way in Colombia. As longtime SOA foe Representative Joe Moakley said, referring to the annual protest by anti-SOA activists, the main change is that the new name will be "far more difficult to chant outside the gates."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Last seen exhorting Wen Ho Lee's lynchers, former Energy Department director of intelligence Notra Trulock has resurfaced in a more modest role (see Robert Scheer, "No Defense," October 23, 2000). Trulock is now media relations director of the ultraconservative Free Congress Foundation in Washington, a position that recent history suggests he is well suited for, given his record of planting false stories in the *New York Times*.

NEWS OF THE WEAK IN REVIEW

After the 1999 Battle of Seattle, the World Trade Organization has had a devil of a time finding a city willing to host the next round of trade talks, November 5–9. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that after a long string of turndowns, the WTO finally found a hospitable venue: the emirate of Qatar, a minuscule, semifeudal state on the Persian Gulf. No matter that there aren't enough hotel rooms in the capital, Doha; delegates will sleep on cruise ships anchored in the harbor. Qatar says WTO critics may attend, but given the gnat-sized nation's undemocratic rule, opponents are dubious. John Sellers, head of the Ruckus Society, told the *Journal*, "The WTO would have a much easier time if they just bought a remote island and fortified its coastline to keep the pesky public away."

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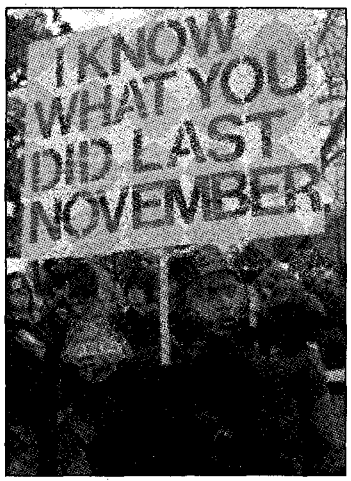
THE BEAT BY JOHN NICHOLS



BRIDGET BESAW GORMAN

Demonstrator Tom Grayman at an inauguration protest.

AGAINST FORGETTING George W. Bush's inauguration went less smoothly than the GOP would have liked, as thousands of activists filled the streets of Washington to protest Bush's disputed election "victory." **NAACP** chapters from as far away as Detroit dispatched busloads of activists for a demonstration that surrounded the Supreme Court building. Protests organized by the **National Organization for Women**, the **National Action Network** and other groups made dissent the order of the day, though a huge police presence blocked several marches and prevented the use of giant puppets and other tools of post-Seattle protest. The **Kensington Welfare Rights Union** built a tent city, "Bushville USA," on the lawn of the Health and Human Services Department, only to see it dismantled within minutes and its 200 occupants removed by security officials. **Alexis Baden-Meyer**, an organizer of the DC-based **Arts in Action Working Group**, said police restrictions violated freedom of expression. But the protests were still heard—and seen. The most high-profile challenge came along the inaugural parade route, where protesters took over bleachers reserved for Bush supporters and jeered "Jail to the Thief" as the Bush motorcade raced by.... Dozens of protests occurred elsewhere on January 20; NAACP president **Kweisi Mfume** told 1,000 people at an electoral reform rally in Tallahassee, "While the eyes of the nation are on Washington and on this inauguration, we've come back to Florida to say that we remember and we must not ever forget."

TAKING BACK DEMOCRACY On the day before the inaugural, voting rights activists from across the country gathered in Washington to plot a legislative and political crusade to reform the political system. "The Bush people, the Republicans, the Supreme Court—they do not yet fully understand the mistake they made when they decided to steal the election," declared Representative **Cynthia McKinney** of Georgia. Members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, including Senator **Paul Wellstone** and Representatives **Dennis Kucinich**, **Bernie Sanders**, **Jan Schakowsky**, **Barbara Lee**, **Eleanor Holmes Norton** and McKinney, joined academics and activists for seminars, workshops and discussions organized by the **Institute for Policy Studies**, the **Progressive Challenge** network, the **Nation Institute** and the **Center for Voting and Democracy**. The forum was the first of several planned to link grassroots activists with members of the 107th Congress who are pushing reform legislation on issues ranging from the healthcare crisis to the wealth gap. McKinney said the Florida election dispute and anticipated fights over Congressional redistricting created a rare opening for reform. "In 1965, civil rights activism that seemed undoable suddenly became doable after Bloody Sunday," she said. "After Florida 2000, voting reforms that seemed undoable suddenly seem doable. Voting rights is an issue—not just a civil rights issue, but an American issue."

NOT A FAVORITE SON The grilling of Attorney General–designate John Ashcroft by Senators Ted Kennedy and Joe Biden during the Senate Judiciary Committee's confirmation hearings benefited substantially from information provided by one of the nation's most ambitious grassroots organizations, **Missouri Pro-Vote**, a coalition of labor, pro-choice, gay and lesbian, and community activist groups. Soon after Ashcroft's nomination was announced, Pro-Vote officials began working with **Pacifica's *Democracy Now!*** radio program, the **Institute for Public Accuracy** and **USAction**—the national network of state-based progressive groups with which Pro-Vote is affiliated—to spread the word about Ashcroft's extremist views and his record of racial insensitivity. Much of the information had been gathered as part of a five-year monitoring project of the Pro-Vote-linked **Missouri Citizen Education Fund**. Pro-Vote's work to expand African-American voter registration in St. Louis last year—when Ashcroft was narrowly defeated for re-election to the Senate—was honored by the **Coalition of Black Trade Unionists** as part of that city's **Martin Luther King Day** festivities.

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRIC "You can't always get what you want," crooned activist-musician **Doug Hartnett**, as his band the **Oxymorons** ripped into the Rolling Stones classic and a set of equally appropriate tunes for dissenters on the first night of the George W. Bush Administration. Rocking a crowd of more than 800 at the **Americans for Democratic Action** Counter-Inaugural Gala, Hartnett, who works by day as a lawyer for the whistleblowing **Government Accountability Project**, and the Oxymorons had no trouble filling the dance floor at Washington's Mayflower hotel with a multigenerational crowd that answered the call to "party liberally." Grand Old Partyers arriving to celebrate in another wing of the hotel did double takes when they encountered revelers like Baltimore's Sarah McClintock, whose green brocade gown was accented with gold glitter slogans that read, "Reject the Republicans" and "Jail to the Thief." "I wanted to make a fashion statement that no one would misinterpret," announced a grinning McClintock.

BRIDGET BESAW GORMAN

Doug Hartnett

John Nichols's e-mail is jnichols@thenation.com. Additional reporting on the inaugural protests by Shayna Cohen and Kathryn Lewis.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

From San Juan Hill to Chengue

He had a busy finale, didn't he, primarily saving his own hide and issuing pardons: eeny meeny miny mo, Marc Rich yes, Leonard Peltier no. In *Rolling Stone* he called for an end to the disparity in sentencing for powder and crack cocaine that he adamantly refused to fix a few years earlier. What else? Let's see, he gave Teddy Roosevelt the Medal of Honor and boasted in the accompanying speech on January 16 that in 1993 he'd broken with the usual policy of incoming Democratic Presidents, who would pull the portrait of TR off the wall above the mantelpiece in the White House's Roosevelt Room and put up FDR instead. Then the incoming Republican Commander in Chief would reverse the process. Not our Bill. He kept TR up on the wall, triangulating right from the start. On January 16 Bill said it was high time to give TR the medal for which he had been recommended right after the charge up San Juan Hill.

Exit Bill, enter the new team, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, who now has a chance to live up to those fine words of his to the Republicans massed in Philadelphia for their convention last August. Powell told the plump delegates they should not forget the poor and the afflicted.

How might Powell distinguish himself from his predecessor Madeleine Albright? The latter's final act in office was, with the approval of Clinton, to insist that a slab of US military aid to Colombia should not be held up out of any pettifogging concerns for human rights. The Colombian military and its death squads have a documented record for bestial carnage unrivaled in the entire world, and so, in admiration for this pre-eminence, last August Clinton waived four of the five human rights criteria laid out by Congress to release the first chunk of $781.5 million. A certification or waiver was also required for the second installment, of $56.4 million. While conceding that the record of the Colombian military was not all that it could be, the Clinton Administration nonetheless decided that because the second slice of aid was not included in "regular funds" but rather in an emergency spending bill, the certification and waiver process did not apply.

On January 17, the day after Bill honored the imperialist hero of the Spanish-American War, and when Albright and the others were still chortling at their ingenuity in circumventing the human rights provisions, the BBC's correspondent in Bogotá, Jeremy McDermott, reported that "alleged right-wing paramilitaries" had attacked a village on Colombia's northwest coast, killing twenty-five people. "Fifty men in military uniform arrived in Chengue in the early hours of the morning," McDermott told his audience. "They rounded up 25 men whom they accused of being guerrilla sympathizers and hacked them to death with machetes. They then set fire to thirty houses of this village in the northern province of Sucre." McDermott added that the massacre had all the hallmarks of the Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, a right-wing paramilitary army of 8,000 fighters "deeply involved in the drug trade."

For months the inhabitants of Chengue had a pretty good idea of what might lie in store for them. On October 6 they wrote a letter to Colombian President Andrés Pastrana, detailing the threat of violence and human rights abuses that the people of the Municipal de Ovejas feel could occur at any moment on the part of paramilitary groups operating in the region. The terrified townsfolk urged Pastrana to do something "to avoid a massacre," explaining that the government's presence was minimal in the area and that the people live in "anguish and tension" because of the documented barbarism. Attached to the letter were the signatures of ninety-nine residents of the town.

While the villagers were appealing to Pastrana to save their lives, the Clinton Administration was putting spurs to "Plan Colombia," a strategy straight off the Pentagon's Vietnam and Central American drawing board. Beefed up by US training, "advisers," arms and intelligence, the Colombian military has been planning to overwhelm guerrilla bases in southern Colombia, simultaneously eradicating the coca and poppy fields, which are the peasants' only resource, the option of legal crops long since sabotaged by US economic policies. Pretenses that the Clinton Administration is strongly supportive of a peaceful solution to Colombia's troubles has become increasingly ludicrous, as dollars and kindred practical support for the Colombian military and its death squads have flooded from Washington to Bogotá.

As a man who helped cover up the My Lai massacre, Powell knows all about such campaigns of pacification. And since he's not dumb, he knows that Plan Colombia will merely augment that country's misery, which has more than half the population below poverty level, internal refugees by the million and no prospects for improvement. He knows too that "drug interdiction," partly the official US rationale for Plan Colombia, is a farce. He knows where the $1.3 billion should have gone: into the drug education and rehab programs here in the United States. The Clinton Administration and its Republican allies successfully beat back an effort by Senator Paul Wellstone to get about $225,000 of the package reserved to that end.

What's the chance of Powell pressing for a different approach in Colombia? Zero, I'd say. But at least once we should remind him of his rhetoric in Philadelphia, just as we should remind Bush at least once of his eloquent inaugural speech about helping the poor. Why collude with these folks in their degradation of language and morals?

And Bill? He's in Chappaqua glad-handing the locals and contemplating the memoirs that will doubtless be as mendacious as those of Teddy Roosevelt, like Clinton a Force Ten blowhard and self-inflater. In a couple of weeks Bill will be ogling the girls in the bank and suggesting sorties to the local hot-mattress motel, if such sanctuary is available in the purlieus of the Saw Mill River Parkway. If she's called Gennifer we'll have come back to the beginning, just as, on the larger canvas, we do year after year with San Juan Hill. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

Which Way W.?

As the proverbial curtain rises on the Bush era in national politics, it's hard to know just how pessimistic progressives should be about the new President's aims and intentions. On a rhetorical level, we were greeted with an inaugural address that with a few minor adjustments could have been given by an incoming president of the NAACP. Look at the substance, however, and we find nominees at the Justice and Interior departments who could have been vetted by the John Birch Society, if not the Army of the Confederacy. The two warring sides of the Republican psyche were neatly illustrated recently at a dinner sponsored by the Philanthropy Roundtable at the Regency Hotel in New York, where two current stars of the Republican rubber-chicken circuit, *Weekly Standard* editor David Brooks and American Enterprise Institute "research scholar" and Olin fellow Dinesh D'Souza, held forth after a nicely Republican red-meat repast.

Brooks is still riding the wave of his bestselling work of "comic sociology" about America's new elite, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*. His talk, like the book, is mostly affectionate ribbing of this class for its bourgeois consumption habits and bohemian self-image. Though he'd be loath to admit it, Brooks is an old-fashioned liberal Republican, not unlike Poppy Bush before he got the bit of presidential ambition in his teeth and found his principles run over by a Reagan landslide. (Just what Brooks is doing in a party dominated not by Prescott Bush and Elliot Richardson but Dick Armey and Tom DeLay is a question for another day.) A self-confessed Bobo, Brooks has only one problem with this tolerant, secular-minded and self-satisfied elite—its lack of civic consciousness.

There are no poor people in the Bobo world—even illegal Guatemalan nannies are treated as if they are taking care of your children and cleaning your bathroom as a lifestyle choice rather than out of economic necessity. "The new elite," as Brooks explained to the assembled philanthropists, "has no ethic of chivalry." Charitable giving as a percentage of assets has not remotely kept up with the unprecedented explosion of wealth in the United States during the past decade.

The virtues of such selfishness, on the other hand, have never escaped Dinesh D'Souza. The young Indian immigrant made his name in this country giving eloquent voice to the most morally repugnant aspects of Reagan-era Republicanism. He began his career as an obnoxious Dartmouth undergrad, publishing crude racist attacks in the off-campus conservative newspaper, followed by a stint at a Princeton magazine where he delighted in exposing details of female undergrads' sex lives. His first book was a loving appreciation of aspiring ayatollah Jerry Falwell.

D'Souza became a national phenomenon with a book attacking PC culture at universities, which was defensible, if overstated, and an apologia for American racism, which he termed "rational discrimination." With its pseudointellectual patina, D'Souza's work, even more than Charles Murray's, seems designed to offer solace to those who miss the good old days of Jim Crow laws and late-night cross burnings. Segregation, he argued, was designed to protect African-Americans and "to assure that [they], like the handicapped, would be...permitted to perform to the capacity of their arrested development." It would end when "blacks as a group can show that they are capable of performing competitively in schools and the work force."

D'Souza is touring for a new work, *The Virtue of Prosperity: Finding Values in an Age of Techno-Affluence*. (It is a measure of how well-funded are right-wing arguments that I have so far received four unrequested copies.) The thrust of his argument is the opposite of that of Brooks. Simply put, wealth has no obligations to poverty except to avoid it. As he once argued for the logic of racism, he now speaks for the morality of parsimony. The United States, he asserts, is "probably the best society that now exists or has ever existed."

D'Souza is the kind of moral philosopher who pays more attention to the musings of the Ayn Rand–spouting entrepreneur T.J. Rodgers, who races his BMW over speed bumps while attacking the moral probings of the clergy, than he does to the combined works of John Rawls and Richard Rorty. (Terming the latter "Rip Van Rorty" is what passes for wit in these pages.) Reinhold Niebuhr receives no mention at all.

Of course, it's not exactly hard to find billionaires who think of themselves as altruists regardless of the obscene amounts of wealth they accumulate. But it is much more cost-effective to induce "intellectuals" to say it for them. D'Souza fills this purpose not only by celebrating mass wealth but by abolishing poverty. "Poverty," he argues, "understood as the absence of food, clothing, and shelter, is no longer a significant problem in America." His evidence for this breathtaking claim is that even poor people have refrigerators these days, and many of them are fat. That 30 million Americans still struggle beneath the poverty line and 42 million lack the benefit of health insurance represent, to D'Souza, mere speed bumps on our highway to capitalist utopia.

When Bush *père* was inaugurated, he too made a great show of what was not yet called "compassionate conservatism." He acknowledged that poor people exist and that somebody should do something about it, but as a society, he warned, we had "more will than wallet." (And anyway, his contributors were demanding a cut in the tax on capital gains.) Dubya closed his inaugural with a similar flourish, in which he promised to work "to make our country more just and generous."

To show that Dubya is even remotely serious about his agenda for the poor, he and his Administration will have to ponder the kinds of questions raised by Brooks about the moral obligations of wealth. That is, after all, about the best one can expect from Republicans. But to the degree that he wishes to prove what his enemies insist to be true—that all this compassionate conservatism is simply a frilly frock in which to clothe the Reaganite Republican values of top-down class war—expect to hear plenty more from Dinesh D'Souza. ■

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ARTICLES

MARTIN KOZLOWSKI

CALIFORNIA'S DEREGULATION DISASTER

by HARVEY WASSERMAN

Blackouts, brownouts and soaring electricity rates have defined the political landscape of California since last spring. They've transformed the phrase "utility deregulation" into a household epithet. They've stopped in its tracks a nationwide wave of electricity restructuring that has already claimed two dozen states and was about to sweep the rest. And they've helped create a crisis whose economic and ecological shock waves will carry deep into the new century.

The roots of this unnatural disaster lie in the corporate boardrooms of the utility companies now on the brink of bankruptcy. It was their mismanagement and greed that led directly to some of the greatest miscalculations in US business history. Those missteps, and their impact, were clearly predicted by consumer and environmental activists, who fought to prevent them. "This was a catastrophe we all saw coming," says Dan Berman, coauthor of *Who Owns the Sun?* "But the power companies had an agenda to push and the money to foist it on the public. Now we all reap the whirlwind."

California's dereg disaster began in 1996, when the state's three dominant utilities banded together to force on their ratepayers "the largest corporate ripoff in American business history," as Ralph Nader has put it [see Wasserman, "The Last Energy War," March 16, 1998]. At the time, Pacific Gas & Electric (then the nation's largest privately owned utility), San Diego Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison were caught in a squeeze between their big industrial customers, who were threatening to generate power on their own, and the burden of their own bad investments in obsolete generators, mainly nuclear power plants. They were also tired of having their rates regulated by the state's ninety-year-old Public Utility Commission. What they wanted was to cash out of those bad investments, keep their big customers and make profits at will, without regulation.

So they proposed the following: Regulation of distribution lines will stay intact. We will separate the business of generating power from the business of distributing it to the public. We will spin off much if not all of our generating capacity (though in fact much of this was done only on paper, with power plants merely being transferred to the distribution companies' parent corporations). Then, as pure distribution companies, we will compete with other resellers for customers, who can choose their suppliers and even purchase "green" energy from companies selling wind and solar. Competition will rule. Prices will go down.

The price tag for Californians? Somewhere between $20 billion and $28.5 billion in upfront "stranded costs," i.e., direct paybacks to the utilities for their bad generating plants. These charges would be levied through "transition fees" and other surcharges, buried in customers' bills but adding up to as much as 30 percent

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of monthly payments. During the time it would take to pay back those bad investments, retail prices would be frozen. The California Public Utility Commission would also get $89 million in ratepayer money to promote the new scheme, giving utilities a leg up on whatever competition might materialize.

A bill, AB 1890, was drafted in SoCalEd's offices. After a few perfunctory hearings, the legislature passed it unanimously and Governor Pete Wilson, then a presidential candidate, eagerly signed it. Some consumer and environmental groups were furious about a wide range of issues, most notably the reactor bailouts, which they worried (correctly) would prolong the operating life of deteriorating nukes and other polluters. So in 1998, as the bill was taking effect, a broad coalition put a repeal on the ballot. Surmounting virtually impossible odds, the coalition gathered more than 700,000 signatures in less than five months. Initial polls indicated the measure would be a close call, but the utilities spent $40 million, calling in their chits with labor, ethnic and other organizations around the state. The repeal went down, getting 27 percent of the vote.

None of the two dozen other states that have deregulated have yet suffered a disaster on California's scale, but results are mixed.

But in their haste to cash out, SoCalEd and PG&E made some critical miscalculations. Most important was their assumption that there would always be a surplus of cheap wholesale electricity. So they sold off too much of their generating capacity and had too little of their own supply at a time when rates were still frozen. Then came a hot summer and a cold winter. Natural-gas prices shot up. Some key generators went down. Storms knocked out transmission lines. The nukes had problems. The utilities found themselves at the mercy of independent producers who'd snapped up generating capacity and could manipulate the wholesale market. Having dismantled key efficiency programs, the utilities now realized that their customers, buying power at fixed costs, had little incentive to conserve. So demand quickly outstripped cheap wholesale supply, which now spiked up at the whim of those with power to sell. PG&E and SoCalEd became wounded, bleeding whales at the mercy of sharks they could not control.

Companies like the North Carolina–based Duke Energy, Reliant of Texas and the Houston-based Enron, the nation's biggest natural-gas distributor (and a key supporter of George W. Bush), made billions selling power at high rates to the companies that had just sold them their generators. By one estimate, since last spring PG&E and SoCalEd have spent $12 billion more on power than they were able to collect from their customers. In some cases, the two companies were forced to sell juice to consumers at a rate of $64 per megawatt-hour while paying $1,400 for it.

Even rival utilities got into the act. Oregon's Portland General Electric withdrew a proposed rate hike for its own customers when it realized it could sell power in California at a higher profit. At least two large bauxite smelters in the Northwest shut down and realized some $500 million in profits by selling into the southbound grid cheap electricity they were buying on long-term contracts with hydro generators. Selling power was, simply, more profitable than making aluminum. Perhaps most telling of all, the parent companies of PG&E and SoCalEd made as much as $3 billion selling power to electricity distributors, which were now pleading for state help to avoid bankruptcy.

California Governor Gray Davis made repeated calls to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and other national bodies to help fix prices, guarantee supply and punish those companies gouging California consumers. But if the crisis has illustrated anything, it's the inability of federal agencies to control powerful suppliers whose political clout is exceeded only by their ability to have their way with one of the world's most complex entities, the electric-power grid. "Never again can we allow out-of-state profiteers to hold Californians hostage," vowed a frustrated Davis. But at this point it's not clear who could prevent it. Congress has debated national deregulation bills, but they've gone nowhere. And most were headed in the wrong direction, giving the private companies more license to mess with the system, not less.

None of the two dozen other states that have deregulated have yet suffered a disaster on California's scale, but the results have been decidedly mixed. By promising low rates and real competition, Massachusetts utilities beat back a 1998 repeal on the same day as the California repeal vote. Says Deb Katz of the grassroots Citizens Awareness Network, "Massachusetts rates are now some of the highest outside California. The only ones benefiting are the nuclear corporations that have had their bad debts paid on our back." Similar stories are repeated in nuke-laden Illinois and Michigan. In Ohio ratepayers have been saddled with more than $5 billion in bad reactor debts, and no real competition is on the horizon. In Pennsylvania, citizen groups beat back some of the utilities' stranded-cost demands. As a result, some margin has opened up for actual competition, and green energy suppliers have made some headway. But in Texas, which deregulated right in the midst of the California crisis, and in New York, which is doing it piecemeal, the results are not yet in. In two dozen other states that remain regulated, and in Congress, the term "gun-shy" might apply.

In California itself, consumer advocates want to put a sweeping rollback on the 2002 ballot. Harvey Rosenfield of the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights, an early AB 1890 opponent, and others believe the utilities' ability to hoodwink the public will be severely constrained by recent memories of tripled electric bills and borderline survival. Gene Coyle, an energy analyst, says that if prices "shoot skyward again, a campaign should be winnable."

The state and private utilities are now caught in a vise. San Diego Gas & Electric, which had fewer stranded costs to pay off and thus quickly escaped the rate freeze, was able to double and triple its rates last summer, infuriating Southern California consumers. Meanwhile, Governor Davis is soaking taxpayers to buy power to resell to SoCalEd and PG&E to save them from bankruptcy because their rates are frozen. But if they weren't frozen,

Harvey Wasserman is the author of The Last Energy War: The Battle Over Utility Deregulation *(Seven Stories). He is senior adviser to Greenpeace USA and the Nuclear Information & Resource Service.*

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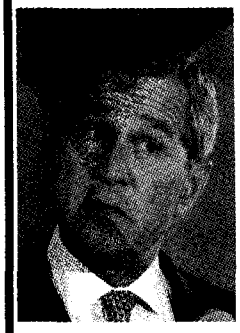
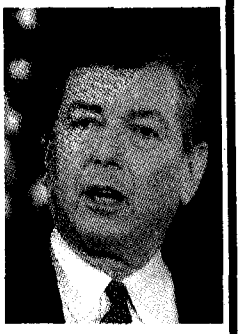
Learn more about the forces of religious conservatism behind
George W. Bush and John Ashcroft





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their rates would double and triple, infuriating the rest of the state.

"It's all been a big shell game," says Oakland-based activist Paul Fenn (see www.local.org). "The distribution companies are causing panic by threatening bankruptcy with huge paper losses. But the parent companies are quietly taking huge profits while not accounting for all that stranded-cost money, which is tucked away in foreign and out-of-state investments. Meanwhile, the public gets no tangible assets in exchange for the subsidies. It's an astounding ripoff."

Through it all, dereg apologists are having a hard time explaining why two California power companies were immune to the crisis: the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. Both are owned by the public, and both maintain heavy commitments to renewables and efficiency. In 1989 Sacramento voted to shut its one nuclear reactor, and has since pioneered a major shift to solar, wind and biomass energy, with heavy commitments to conservation.

During the crisis, rates charged by both companies have been stable. The two "munis" actually made money selling power to their embattled private neighbors, underscoring the fact that throughout the United States, public-owned power districts supply electricity cheaper and more reliably than the private utilities. The California crisis has already spurred grassroots movements in San Francisco, Davis and elsewhere to demand municipals of their own. "In the long run," says author Dan Berman, "public ownership is central to any real solution to the problems of the electric-utility grid."

So is conservation. At the peak of the crisis, Governor Davis ordered widespread efficiency measures that kept demand down without significant impact on the health and safety of the public. "Had the state been more aggressively pursuing efficiency all along," says Coyle, "much of the crisis could have been avoided."

Nonetheless, the constant drumbeat for more generating capacity will be hard to counter. And the widespread assumption is that any new power plants will be fossil- or nuclear-fueled. But every US reactor ordered since 1973 has been canceled. There are none now under construction here, and resistance would be ferocious, especially in light of nuclear power's role in prompting the crisis in the first place. A year ago, natural gas would have seemed the logical choice for new generating capacity. But prices have soared and aren't likely to come back down soon.

Which leaves what the consumer/environmental community that opposed AB 1890 has been arguing for all along—renewables. The most notable new Western power plant is now stringing its way along the Oregon-Washington border. It consists of 450 windmills with sufficient capacity to power 70,000 homes. With construction under way in February, electricity could be surging out by December 31, a far faster construction timetable than for any other source. The fuel supply will be cheap, stable and clean. Environmental opposition will be nil.

Thanks to 15,000 windmills built in the 1980s under Governor Jerry Brown (now mayor of Oakland), California once produced 90 percent of the world's wind power. But the big utilities wanted little to do with them. Last year the world-leader's mantle slipped to Germany, which built the equivalent of a large reactor's capacity in wind power. Had California done the same, things might have been different. "The message is clear, " says Coyle. "The power supply needs to be controlled by the public. And efficiency and renewables work. Do we have to go through this again to relearn those lessons?" ■

Letter From Bosnia

by Dusko Doder

Mostar

A makeshift eyesore of a structure now stands in the place of the fabled sixteenth-century stone bridge across the Neretva River in the Bosnian town of Mostar. The beautiful old bridge, which had been an unofficial emblem of Bosnia, was destroyed in the bitter fighting between Muslims and Croats. It is still hard to believe it is gone. The bridge, built by Bosnia's Ottoman rulers and an object of tourist wonder, had withstood earthquakes, floods and wars. But not the battles of 1992–95.

As I stood on the rickety new bridge, I couldn't help thinking of it as a metaphor for today's Bosnia (officially Bosnia and Herzegovina), for the destruction of the old common "Bosnian" identity, which transcended religion and ethnic background. "Screw the country that doesn't have a Bosnia," people used to say, crudely summing up their pride. To be Bosnian was to possess an arrogant and irreverent attitude to life, a self-deprecating sense of humor and pride in the uniqueness and diversity of the place. But that Bosnian identity, which had seemed as robust as the bridge, also blew apart in the fighting and is unlikely to be rebuilt anytime soon, particularly under present circumstances. That much was clear in the recent parliamentary elections, which solidified hard-line nationalist divisions among the three main ethnic groups: Serbs, Croats and Muslims.

By way of background, early on in the Yugoslav wars, many Bosnians believed they could avoid getting caught up in the ethnic hatreds. The nationalist manias at the time were being directed from Serbia and Croatia. The Muslims felt caught in the middle (centuries earlier, they had been Serbs or Croats but changed their religion to win better treatment from their Ottoman rulers, and their new Muslim identities became fixed). They soon began to feel they would have to side with Serbia or Croatia to survive. The Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic summed up how they felt: It was, he said, a choice between "leukemia and a brain tumor."

Dusko Doder's most recent book, written with Louise Branson, is Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant *(Free Press).*

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Around Mostar, as elsewhere, the Muslims first joined with the Croats to drive out the Serbs. Then Muslims and Croats fought each other in bitter, house-to-house battles in which the bridge was destroyed.

Eventually—and under US pressure—Muslim and Croat leaders agreed in Washington to form a Muslim-Croat federation, which, under the 1995 US-brokered Dayton agreement ending the fighting, comprises just over half of Bosnia. The other half is the Serb republic. The two work together in a single parliament. It is a good arrangement—but only on paper. In reality, Bosnia is the ugly and resentful stepchild of a peace imposed and subsidized by resented outsiders. The country has received an estimated $5.2 billion in aid, excluding military expenditures, since the Dayton agreement. It has become, essentially, a Western protectorate. It has three ethnic armies and three ethnic police forces. It depends on foreign handouts. Unemployment is at 45 percent.

Attempts to create a semblance of multiethnic political action—as exemplified by the emergence in the recent elections of the Social Democrats as the party of enlightened professionals of all three nationalities—have made some inroads among the urban elites of Sarajevo and Tuzla. But small towns and villages are on a different vector; the Croats think of themselves as the true guardians of Croatian nationalism and regard most politicians currently in power in Croatia proper as pacifists and choirboys. Any idea of multiculturalism is dismissed out of hand. "We don't want to have anything to do with the *muslimanija*," said Vera, the waitress in a tavern in the Croat town of Capljina. Her voice was stony.

'There's no life for us here,' said Muharem Halilovic. He had already moved his wife and two daughters to Detroit.

That pejorative term for the Muslims originated with the Bosnian Croat leader Ante Jelavic, who does not hide the fact that his objective is "union" with Croatia, which means the destruction of Bosnia. His deputy, Marko Tokic, was even more explicit on this point during the recent election campaign. There were newspaper reports that Tokic used the Hitler salute at campaign rallies.

The Serbs are equally adamant about their desire to join Yugoslavia eventually (which has shrunk to Serbia and the small republic of Montenegro). The newly elected Yugoslav president, Vojislav Kostunica, seemed to underscore symbolically his commitment to this idea when he turned up recently in eastern Bosnia to attend the reburial of a Serb poet who died in exile in the United States during World War II. The ceremony, in the poet's hometown of Trebinje, about eighty miles east of here, was attended by the entire Bosnian Serb leadership as well as by top dignitaries of the Orthodox Church.

The Muslims are once again caught in the middle. The future of Bosnia seems to them more precarious now that Croatia's Franjo Tudjman is dead and Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic is no longer in power. Some voices in the West, formerly solidly behind the Muslims, are now suggesting that the "nation-building" project in Bosnia is doomed and that the only alternative is to allow the complete ethnic division of Bosnia.

The Muslims in general see this as a disaster, but are divided on how to proceed. On one side are the Muslim intellectual elites, who always favored a Bosnia integrated into a cosmopolitan Europe rather than a rump ecclesiastical state beholden to Iran and Saudi Arabia. On the other is rural Bosnia, which has supported Izetbegovic, the founder of an exclusively Islamic political party whose dream was to create a Muslim state in Bosnia. Even at the humblest levels people worry that the Muslims will be outmaneuvered by the new governments in Belgrade and Zagreb, which have suddenly emerged as respectable international players. "There's no life for us here," said Muharem Halilovic, a restaurant owner, brooding over a cup of thick black coffee. He had already moved his wife and two daughters to Detroit, he said, and was planning his own departure.

His friend Ibrahim asked in a voice full of disbelief, "Is [George W.] Bush really going to pull the troops out of Bosnia? If that happens, we're going back to 1992." Yeah, Muharem agreed, perhaps Izetbegovic was right when he said Dayton may turn out to be the "most expensive cease-fire in history."

The idea that the present situation in Bosnia is an expensive cease-fire is pervasive. "We've made a mistake," one man, formerly a top aide to Tudjman in Croatia, told me. "We should have worked much closer with the Serbs to solve this problem." He was referring to an infamous meeting between Milosevic and Tudjman back in 1991. They made plans to divide Bosnia between them: some to Serbia, some to Croatia, swallowing the Muslims up. But—partly because of Washington's intervention—Tudjman was kept in check. Soon Serbia and Croatia were at war with each other. And then came the Bosnia war.

And now this uneasy, outside-imposed peace.

What is quite clear is that the wars continue below the surface. Different forces pull different parts in different directions. Bosnia is an example of what is not working. Croatia and Serbia, ironically, are finding far steadier and more democratic feet since the fall of Milosevic and the death of Tudjman.

What needs to be applied now to the whole region is some clearheaded thinking and realpolitik. The United States has a particular stake in this. Of course, it is the "international community" that has taken responsibility for the Balkan protectorates, and it was the NATO alliance that waged a war against Yugoslavia in 1999. But it is impossible to find anyone in the region—Serb, Croat, Muslim or Albanian—who is not convinced that the United States is in complete control.

Clinton Administration officials remained stuck on the idea that it was possible to achieve some semblance of multiethnic society in Bosnia and Kosovo, even though there were some disputes over this with NATO allies. The Americans, one Western European diplomat said acidly, "are incapable of entertaining any options because that would be tantamount to acknowledging that they have failed" in the Balkans. American policy has continued to dominate NATO's approach to the region, even though virtually nobody in a position of authority in Washington has paid sustained attention to developing a deeper solution.

The fall of Milosevic and a new presidency in America provide a chance for a new look at the broader picture. It could be

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an opportunity to work in tandem with Europe to try to use the vast sums of money already committed to make the region less dependent. What is needed, in short, is constructive imagination. Which first requires learning from recent developments.

One lesson that should stand out is that nationalist excesses in Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo have eventually brought popular retribution. The Croats voted in the moderate coalition government of Prime Minister Ivica Racan in early 2000. In power a year, it has set a more civilized tone after a decade of the militant nationalism and intolerance that were the hallmark of the Tudjman regime. The new government has handed over some accused war criminals to the Hague tribunal and cut off most financial subsidies to Croat nationalists in Bosnia.

The Serbs, meanwhile, threw out Milosevic later in 2000 and brought in a new leader in Belgrade, Kostunica, who has begun moving in the same direction. He has publicly acknowledged that Serbian forces committed crimes in Kosovo in 1999, and he has talked about creating a "truth commission" to examine Serbian atrocities committed during various wars. It seems only a matter of time before Milosevic himself is tried.

In Kosovo, the moderate party of Ibrahim Rugova, the longtime leader of Kosovo Albanians, who counts Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi as his heroes, won a resounding victory in local elections last fall over the thuggish radical nationalists who seized control of the province in 1999 after the NATO war. While he preaches nonviolence, Rugova's goal has been independence. But he is a civilized and serious man who may be prepared to negotiate to accept a broad autonomy for Kosovo within a democratic Yugoslavia.

In Bosnia, in contrast, anger is instead being directed at the outsiders imposing and subsidizing the peace: military forces, aid donors and others.

Two other areas where anger is already exploding—against the United States in particular—are Kosovo and Montenegro. The people of both regions are anxious now, after the fall of Milosevic. In Kosovo the majority Albanians see this as a disaster for their quiet slide toward independence. The same applies for Serbia's sister republic of Montenegro, whose president, Milo Djukanovic, turned against Milosevic in 1998 and proposed independence as a desirable option. As long as Milosevic was in power, both Kosovo and Montenegro enjoyed support in the West.

In Kosovo "they believed in Washington's verbal encouragement for Albanian self-determination," said one senior Western diplomat. "Now Washington's opposed to independence. I worry about possible reprisals against NATO troops." The fear of reprisals has lessened with the recent election of the more moderate Albanian leaders. But still, the tensions are high.

In Montenegro, many feel betrayed by the United States for encouraging them to break away from Milosevic and for now insisting that future relations between the two sister republics must be resolved by negotiations between Djukanovic and Kostunica. Montenegro was already deeply divided on the issue of independence, however, even while Milosevic was still in power.

An option that could be considered is the creation of soft borders—no worse, perhaps, than changing other internal borders of Yugoslavia. Much of the West once considered that a heresy, but Yugoslavia is now divided into five different countries. There could be rewards from the international community to all involved that need not cost more than present operations in the Balkans. It could be much like Scotland, which now has its own parliament but has not seceded from Britain—though in time it could do so. Britain continues to control defense, foreign policy and other matters. Soft partition in the Balkans would need similar rules in order to protect the interests of the Muslims as they seek to define themselves and a realistic future.

Such a soft partition of Bosnia has a precedent in the former Yugoslavia: Kosovo and Vojvodina were autonomous provinces within Serbia and enjoyed broad powers, including their own universities, assemblies and executives. It only failed when Milosevic, riding and encouraging a wave of nationalist hysteria, abolished their autonomy in 1989. The point is that soft partition could allow different entities enough autonomy to encourage solutions from within. Perhaps then, nationalist excesses (which would also bring international sanctions such as were imposed on Serbia) would be punished by the majority of the people at the polls, as they have been recently in Croatia, Serbia and

DU in the Balkans

Like much of the Western involvement in the former Yugoslavia, the intense and often heated debate in NATO over the possible ill effects of depleted-uranium ammunition largely ignores the people on whom NATO used these weapons. The debate is focused on higher incidence of cancer and leukemia reported by Western troops who served six-month tours of duty in the Balkans. Six Italians, five Belgians, two Dutch, a Portuguese and a Czech have died, while four French soldiers are reported to have developed leukemia.

The former UN administrator for Kosovo, Bernard Kouchner, a doctor and former French health minister, has dismissed the fuss as "a wave of irrationality." But Dr. Zoran Stankovic, a leading Belgrade pathologist who has investigated areas where DU contamination is thought to be most severe (Bosnia, Kosovo and southern Serbia), reports that unexpectedly high cancer rates are appearing in the local population. His main study focused on about 4,000 people who had lived in the Sarajevo suburb of Hadzici, which was heavily exposed to DU shells during the NATO bombing of 1995. "That group developed a large number of malignant diseases," he says. "Four hundred of them have died so far. Our initial suspicion was that there was a link to the effect of depleted uranium."

Stankovic does not claim to have established a link between the malignant illnesses and the use of DU ammunition. But his research adds weight to demands for an international investigation into health risks associated with DU. In Sarajevo, the Bosnian government has formed a working group to investigate what the Europeans call the "Balkan War Syndrome." It has also asked NATO to provide detailed information about the use of DU ammunition.

More than 10,000 rounds were fired in Bosnia and 31,000 in Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro. Uranium is one of the heaviest metals, which makes it effective in destroying tanks and similar targets. D.D.

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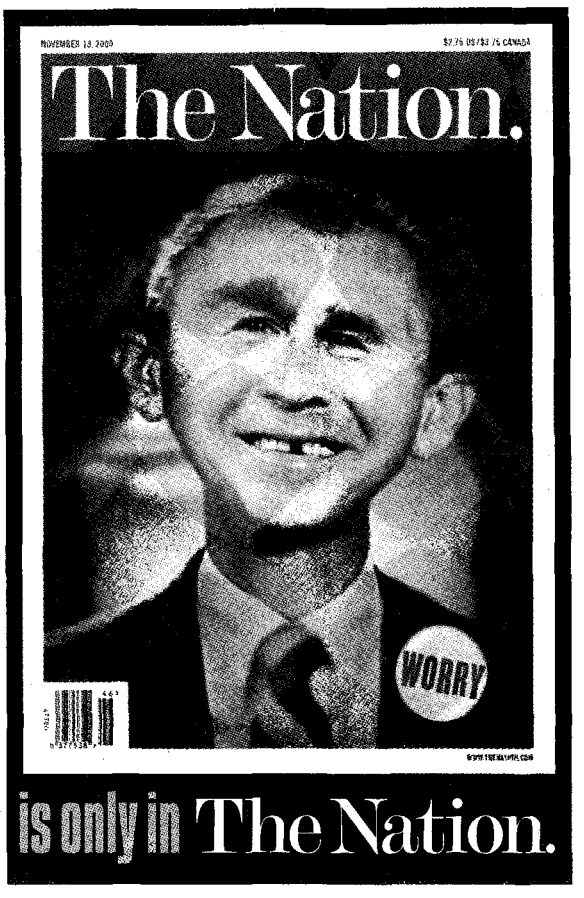
WHAT THE MEDIA AREN'T TELLING YOU

About Bertelsmann's Hidden Nazi Past. In an exposé trumpeted coast to coast, *The Nation* revealed that Bertelsmann—the largest book publisher in the United States—has carefully hidden its stalwart complicity with the Third Reich.

About the Secret History of Lead. In an exhaustive special report, *The Nation* showed how General Motors, Standard Oil and Du Pont colluded to make and market gasoline containing lead—a deadly poison—although there were safe alternatives. Abetted by the US government, they suppressed scientific evidence that lead kills. Still sold in countries all over the world, leaded gasoline continues to poison the planet.

About the *Wall Street Journal*. Contrary to its self-assessment as "the world's most important publication," Gore Vidal noted for *The Nation* "just how unknown this cheery neofascist paper is to the majority of Americans."



About the Battle in Seattle. "Seattle was indeed a milestone of a new kind of politics. Labor shed its nationalism for a new rhetoric of internationalism and solidarity. Progressives replaced their apologetic demeanor of the past twenty years with confidence, style and wit."

About the Battle Beyond Seattle. As William Greider put it in his debut as *The Nation*'s national affairs correspondent, "Arrogance designed the WTO; arrogance will doubtless defend it. In the meantime, the WTO can serve as a splendid rallying point for popular resistance."

About the FBI. An intensive investigation for *The Nation* turned up everything from slovenly casework to massively skewed priorities. Example: Number of convictions for health and safety violations against employees in a single year: one. Number of telephone taps: 1.3 million.

About Arts Funding. As columnist Katha Pollitt wrote, "the right-wing attack on the National Endowment for the Arts is playing to a small, if ferocious, constituency. Contrary to stereotype, Americans *like* the arts, and the more access they have to them, the more they like them."

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Kosovo. Solutions from within seem necessary if the current veneer of peace is to take root. If not, the American-led course could quickly turn against it.

Of course, there are other keys to regional success—one of the most critical being sustained economic and social reconstruction of the entire region. Neither Bosnia nor Kosovo in its present situation is economically viable. Serbia has been economically devastated by Milosevic's misrule as well as by indiscriminate NATO bombardment of its entire industrial base. Even Croatia's economic viability is in serious question; once you leave the capital of Zagreb, you are assaulted by soaring unemployment and pervasive poverty.

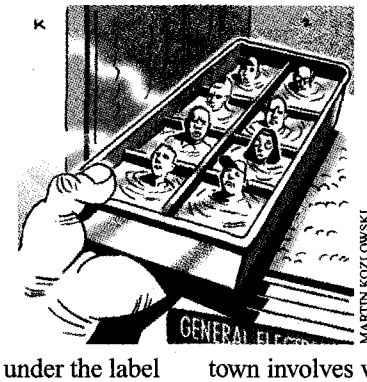
But first and foremost, we should realize that the US model of multiethnic society cannot be transplanted to the Balkans and that any lasting solution has to be indigenous and within the European context. The Europeans must take the lead in this. If they fail to engage the region forcefully, they will insure more instability, strife and years of Western military presence to keep the peace.■

FOR DOWNSIZED WORKERS IN BLOOMINGTON, IT'S TIME TO START THINKING GLOBALLY.

GE Brings Bad Things to Life

JoANN WYPIJEWSKI

There are loftier monuments to human progress in Bloomington, Indiana—the Kinsey Institute, the alma mater of one-half the DNA discovery team of Watson and Crick, the site of the original Dog and Pony Show—but nothing so exuberantly represents the excess of American household convenience as the General Electric side-by-side refrigerator-freezer, manufactured exclusively in the city since 1967 in the biggest such factory in the world. This "Cadillac of refrigerators" (up to $2,449 retail) has been rolling off Bloomington assembly lines under the label GE or Hotpoint or the redoubtable Kenmore at a rate of 230 an hour, 4,700 a day, 1.6 million a year. But the mood at the plant is far changed from what it was thirty years ago, when the Bloomington *Herald-Telephone* ran boosterish photographs of bright-faced GE workers rewarded with checks in the thousands of dollars for their cost-saving suggestions.



MARTIN KOZLOWSKI

In 1999 plant management announced that profitability was falling, that $65 million in cost savings was needed, and it was the job of members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2249 to come up with the money. When they did, the company said it wasn't good enough. Half the production would have to be moved to Celaya, Mexico, where instead of $24 an hour in wages and benefits, labor can be bought for $2 an hour. This past December, 733 GE workers in Bloomington were cast off; in the next few months hundreds more will be out of a job and hard put to match their income and benefits anyplace else in town. When it's all over, 1,400 of the plant's 3,200 jobs will be gone.

GE is the largest manufacturer in Bloomington, but in times of "prosperity," stories like this one don't tear through a town the way they did in the 1980s. Bloomington's official unemployment rate is 1.1 percent. Hoosier basketball coach Bobby Knight lost his, but jobs are in greater number than ever. The city's biggest employer, Indiana University, is expanding; its newest offering, a School of Informatics for the techno age. Real estate is moving at a rapid clip, and the signposts of development are everywhere as this "Crossroads of America" town increasingly becomes a destination for tourists, well-off retirees and small high-tech companies. But there's a bitter wind blowing through the boom. Over the past two years 3,665 well-paid factory jobs have left Bloomington. In Indiana as a whole, since 1994, 15,000 workers a year on average have lost their jobs. The most passionate political dispute in town involves what environmentalists, rural preservationists and others call "the NAFTA highway," a proposed Interstate extension that would put Bloomington on a high-speed freight route from Canada to Mexico. The United Way's Josh Cazares, who also coordinates the local Jobs With Justice, tells of full-time workers taking supplemental part-time gigs, making regular visits to food pantries. "There's a lot of insecurity," Cazares says.

General Electric has made an art of insecurity. It is, says the *New York Times*, "regarded in many management circles as America's most admired corporation." On the cusp of 2000, *Fortune* named CEO Jack Welch, a ruthless megalomaniac, "management revolutionary of the century." Before Welch aborted his well-publicized retirement to make one more big deal, Time Warner paid him $7.1 million for his memoirs, adding to the trove of books offering tips to business climbers eager to emulate his success. No other company has ever posted a year-end profit even close to the $12.7 billion GE piled up in 2000. In polls, consumers recognize its name more widely and think more highly of it than they do any other corporation. They also know almost nothing about it.

They associate it with making things—light bulbs, refrigerators—unaware that its chief business is debt. Over the past two decades GE has transformed itself into the biggest nonbank financial corporation in the world, the biggest owner of planes and vehicles and credit-card debt. Between 1982 and 1997 (a time when American household debt reached previously unimagined heights), GE increased the value of its shares 1,155 percent. It did this while expanding its financial services department and discarding about half its US manufacturing work force. It has moved

JoAnn Wypijewski is a writer in New York City. This article is part of the Haywood Burns Community Activist Journalism series, supported by the New World Foundation and the Nation Institute.

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production offshore, also engineering, and lately gave an ultimatum to its US suppliers, companies that sell it everything from screws to heavy machinery: Move operations to Mexico or lose GE's business. It is a master of mergers and acquisitions, making 125 such deals in 1999 alone and capping 2000 with the $45 billion acquisition of Honeywell, where heads will roll to keep stock prices up. Nor are white-collar and service workers in the GE empire any more secure. With the sinking of Montgomery Ward, 28,000 people lost their jobs; 600 are to be cut at NBC; and though GE's profits were up 19 percent, Wall Street analysts are saying 80,000 of its workers could be jobless before 2001 is over.

Workers still speak of "loyalty" and "corporate responsibility," but as recounted in Thomas O'Boyle's estimable book, *At Any Cost*, Welch announced back in 1982 that GE was responsible only to its shareholders and launched what corporate staff called a "campaign against loyalty," ordering the word struck from company communications. Last summer GE and its unions agreed on a national contract worth $1 billion in wage increases and benefits over three years, but in Bloomington, as in cities across the country where GE still makes things, workers are asking, "What good is a pay increase if I won't have a job?"

GE and its unions agreed on a contract that includes wage hikes, but workers ask: 'What good is a pay increase if I won't have a job?'

The Bloomington plant, more than a million square feet, sprawls along the city's industrial strip, Curry Pike. Its warehouse can accommodate whole cargo trains, its workers forklifting through a maze of mighty refrigerators stacked eight high. Inside, refrigerator doors and inner linings and cases as large as thirty cubic feet dangle overhead, pulled along on chains from one floor to another and onto the lines. Almost everything is made by hand or simple machine. At the plant's easternmost edge is Profile Drive, a token of the town's debt to the popular refrigerator.

GE's mass layoff is not the first in Bloomington in recent years, only the largest. Bill Abbott, who works the night shift in the warehouse, drives to work each day following a trail of bad omens. There's the old Wetterau site, a distribution center for IGA supermarkets that closed in 1997, taking down 114 Teamsters with it. One of Bill's workmates had made $17 an hour there; its nonunion successor, a division of Sara Lee, pays $8. Across the street a WE'RE HIRING! sign advertises a temp agency. Catty-corner, the parking lot is padlocked and sprouting weeds at what had been Westinghouse, then ABB tool and die, both union, first one then the other slowly drained of thousands of jobs; the site was finally abandoned in 1999, another 175 workers down. Just past GE is Cook medical supplies, exemplar of the new breed of companies, fiercely antiunion, hiring at just above minimum wage; and Otis Elevator—union, $15.41 an hour, once employing over 1,000, now down to 527 and counting. Along the strip are a dozen firms with smaller parking lots and smaller wages. One of them, Griner Engineering, is exploring possibilities for producing machine parts in Mexico to meet the price demands of its big industrial customers.

Abbott, 37, began working at GE in 1987, hanging refrigerator cases in the paint department. He never marched or spoke out when those other plants closed; or when RCA, which once had the world's premier production line of color TVs and a work force of 8,000 in Bloomington, got bought by GE, changed hands again, let go of its last 1,100 workers in 1998 and moved to Juárez. He did his job, considered GE Bloomington one of life's fixtures. Cumulatively, his immediate family has given 112 years to the plant.

His wife, Jennifer, started there in 1988. Like thousands of other Bloomington workers trying to prep themselves for "the new economy," she also attends computer classes at Ivy Tech. She's a little anxious that data entry could wreck her wrists, already puffy and cystic from taping refrigerator cartons—an "easy job"—a thousand times a night. She'd prefer to study nursing, but even as it "downsizes," GE won't pay for training in anything not directly applicable to GE work.

Jennifer's mother, Judy Deckard, started at GE in 1978, in the paint department, and jovially remembers when every part of her face and hair that hadn't been masked was tinted almond or white or harvest gold. Now she installs handles and trim on the door line at a rate of 198 an hour. Her husband, Alton, worked at RCA from 1959 building TV cabinets—his mother had cut wire there long enough to get insurance for a hysterectomy, and his mother-in-law spent thirty-two years inserting radio cables—and is happy never to have worked at GE. He recalls the one time that Jack Welch visited the RCA plant, mounted a flatbed truck and told his newly acquired workers that there would be layoffs, six or seven hundred, and sure enough, there were.

Bill's sister, Fonya Chinn, and her husband, Scott, worked ten years at GE until they saw the handwriting on the wall and took lower-paid but more stable jobs. His mother, Mary, was a nonunion housing custodian at the university ($7 an hour) "for 15.981 years" before joining GE in 1988 as an electrical tester ($16.55 an hour). His father, Joe, was among the first workers GE hired, in 1967, and has spent most of his years in quality control.

"When I hired in," Joe said, "my foreman picked me up that first day, sat me down on the line and showed me how to do the job—every bit of it. Then he let me do it and watched until I got it right. He could do that job as good as anyone on that line. But GE got rid of all the old knowledge. They're setting us up to fail. Today the majority of foremen cannot do any of the jobs on the line, don't know what it takes to do that job, have no feeling for what the people are going through."

For now, the Abbott family isn't on the layoff list, but what with one thing and another—the mismanagement and the moneyworship, the injuries and the noise and the sense that life's too short to tolerate disrespect—Bill Abbott says, "I can't stand apart from this anymore. At least I'll know I put up a fight."

Until the whip came down, IBEW Local 2249 was like a lot of local unions: satisfied if the wages rose and the grievances got filed and the overtime kept coming. With those certainties shattered, the choice becomes resistance or resignation. The local's former president Carven Thomas spoke for the latter when he said, "Let me work while I can work. We need to let it go because the jobs are gone."

Thomas was only following in the tradition of GE's unions over the period of Jack Welch's scorched-earth campaign against their members. Since 1991, union representation in GE's US operations has fallen 14 percentage points. In terms of work

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force lost, plant figures from 1984 to 1999 read like casualties of war: Bridgeport, 85 percent; Burlington, 100; Cleveland, 95; Everett, Massachusetts, 100; Hickory, North Carolina, 100; Holland, Michigan, 100; Louisville, 53; Lynn, Massachusetts, 64; Memphis, 60; Philadelphia, 69; Pittsfield, 99; Providence, 63; Rome, Georgia, 100; Syracuse, 100; Youngstown, 100.*

For all that experience, each newly assaulted GE local finds itself having to figure out how to struggle as if it were the first. There's a feeling expressed in Bloomington that the work force may have only begun to bleed. Talking in the parking lot one night after the second shift, workers acknowledged that GE is investing $100 million to build new energy-efficient models there, then noted the opportunity for tax write-offs and the plant manager's warning that investments beyond that are "ours to win or lose." Not one of about a dozen workers believed the plant would be open after 2003, when the present national contract expires. "And what'll you do then?" No one knew. No one had a good word for the International union. About Local 2249's leadership, they were fiercely divided.

'I told them, "What the hell have you got to lose? Stand up, be a supporter, fight for your job."' —Ruth Ann Vaught, union VP

It's easy to romanticize the rank and file until you meet them. Then they're as self-interested and unheroic as most people, and as uncomfortable with change, as timid in the face of what they perceive to be an unstoppable force. Decades of business unionism and almost total unfamiliarity with a culture of struggle—few remember the great GE national strike of 1969—have only reinforced what, after all, is very ordinary behavior. IBEW locals lay down when Westinghouse closed, when RCA closed. Local 2249 was ready to lie down too. But a fresh team took leadership, and they are ruffling feathers by asking the extraordinary.

"Why are the 1,800 [whose jobs will remain] not supporting the 1,400? Why were those 1,400 just laying down?" asks local vice president Ruth Ann Vaught, a taut woman formerly on the door line, with a knowing smile and a will that you wouldn't want to be opposite. "I told them, 'What the hell have you got to lose? Stand up, be a supporter, fight for your job.'"

Almost as soon as she and president Steve Norman took office, in July of 1999, they were blindsided. New federal energy standards would raise production costs, management said; two Bloomington lines would have to be built in Mexico—unless the union could come up with the aforementioned $65 million in savings. The previous local leadership and IBEW HQ in Washington had known about this but hadn't bothered to tell anyone. The International hadn't wanted to take a militant stand in national contract negotiations either. Within the Coordinated Bargaining Committee, which negotiates national contracts covering GE's thirteen unions, the IBEW was "a reluctant partner" when preliminary planning for the contract was beginning in early 1999, according to a well-placed CBC figure who asked to be nameless. "They didn't want a public campaign against GE; they worried about retaliation."

When Norman and Vaught, with no prior experience in such things, began bargaining to save jobs and money, they got no assistance from Washington HQ. "We had to wing it," Vaught says. Worker committees proposed efficiency measures, production adjustments, changes to reduce injuries (thus lost-time costs) and so on. They calculated these to be worth $188 million. At about the same time, GE was threatening International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) Local 761 at its "Appliance Park" in Louisville with a similar extortion scheme. There, the union sacrificed 400 jobs, changed work rules and took wage increases as bonuses rather than as additions to the base pay. GE agreed to keep the threatened production line in Louisville. It got no similar concessions in Bloomington, declared only about $40 million of the union's proposals valid, and now it's off to Celaya. Local 2249 just didn't meet the goal, GE spokesman Terry Dunn says, plain and simple, his voice thick with disdain.

In hindsight, maybe Norman and Vaught shouldn't have played the cost-cutting game. As Richard Segalini, vice president of GE's appliances division, would later clarify for them, "Cooperation is worth zero dollars." But they had to choose from among the available options, and the union's history is such that taking action at the point of production or taking the street weren't the first things that came to mind. Also, Norman—a longhaired, bearded, self-confessed hothead who'd previously served as president—thought the company was counting on an emotional refusal. Cooperation may be worthless, but a union's noncooperation can be worth a fortune in corporate public relations.

Every area of struggle creates opportunities, though, and if the cost-savings exercise delayed more aggressive action—and gave managers the benefit of the workers' knowledge free of charge—it also inspired some collective spirit within the shop. People like Abbott started talking to co-workers, learning about GE, about Mexico, filling notebooks with ideas and recognizing the value of their labor. When the company said they'd come up short, in December of 1999, it raised within them a righteous anger.

It was then that Norman sought help from the community—from Jobs With Justice, the religious folk, the No Sweat! organizers at the university and activist professors. Last March those forces picketed outside the plant. In April Norman put out a memo with the words to "Solidarity Forever" and a kind of manifesto linking GE to Nike, the WTO and the IMF's mission of "imposing austerity on Mexican workers through no less than seven 'structural adjustment agreements'...[whose] effect has been the drastic lowering of the standard of living of Mexican workers." Independently, Abbott and a couple of other workers traveled to Washington for the A16 protest against the IMF and World Bank. At a demonstration against GE in Bloomington on April 29, Abbott wore a suit, marched with veterans and spoke in public for the first time. He's not alone in expressing a sometimes contradictory mix of union radicalism, nationalism, loyalty betrayed and sprouting internationalism. Vaught cuts to the chase for members who might be confused or worse about Mexican workers: "They're not taking your job, brother. They're not taking your job, sister. The company moved there; they're just applying for a job. When GE called you, you

* This is a partial list. Figures like 99, 95, 85 percent represent GE's penchant for keeping a skeleton crew for maintenance or security; that way it's not a "plant closing," and the company avoids paying for severance or retraining.

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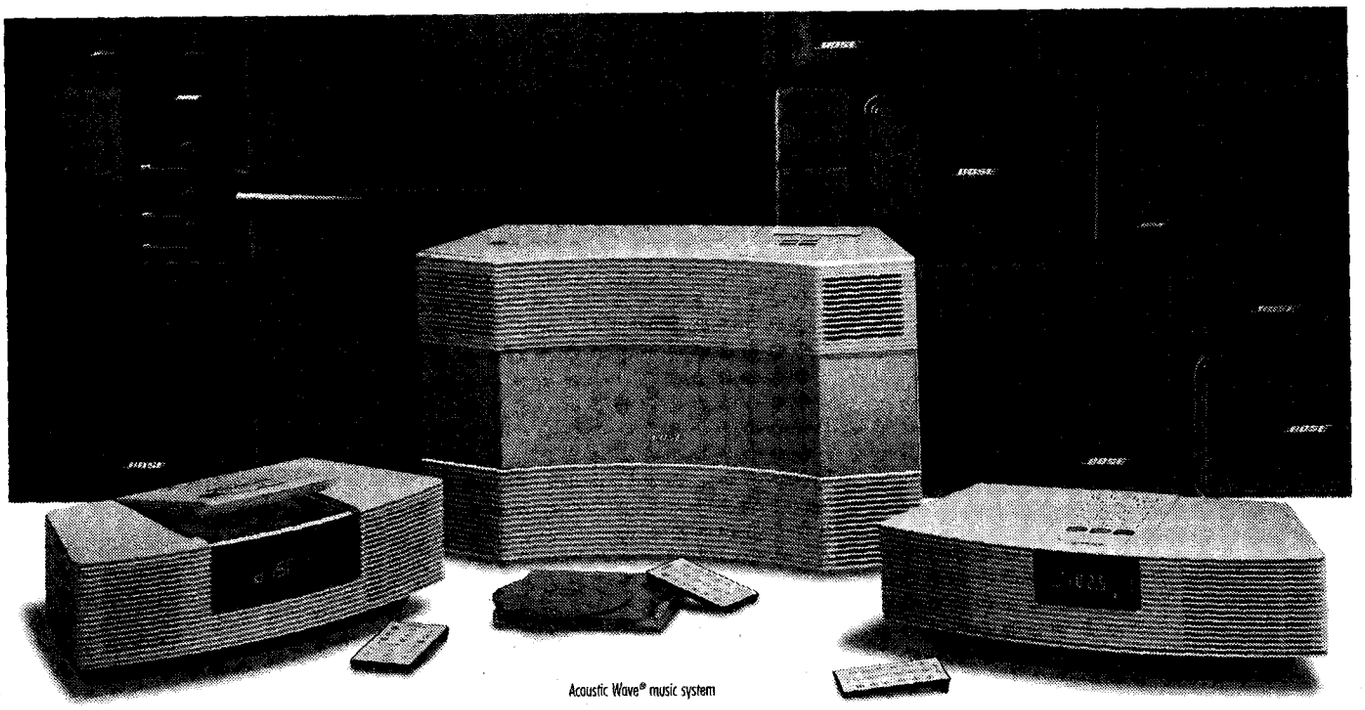

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went because you needed a job. And I have a problem with workers working in a shop for almost nothing, in unsafe conditions and then going home to a shanty shack because they have no alternative." It's not just GE that's at issue; it's the Mexican minimum wage of $3.75 a day that makes GE's wage of $2 an hour seem fabulous.

But confrontation is unsettling. For every Bill Abbott there's at least one worker like the woman who told me her fight was not with GE but with Steve Norman for riling people up, and more who are just passive or afraid. It's an object lesson in the difficulty of building solidarity even in one union, let alone nationally and internationally.

In July the GE national contract, which brought a lot of money but no substantive gains on job security, was approved overwhelmingly in Bloomington, as elsewhere in the country. The local contract, which covers plant conditions and procedures, was rejected overwhelmingly. The 1,400 jobs were not expressly on the table but figured into the union's resolve. The No vote meant going back to the table, and because management had insisted its offer was final, there was the possibility of a strike. But soon after the vote, the IBEW district representative told Norman and Vaught that union HQ in Washington had been getting calls from members of the local complaining they hadn't understood the issues. Norman was ordered to take a second vote. If he didn't, he says, the International "made it clear that they wouldn't sanction a strike. That means it would have been an illegal strike; I wouldn't do that to my people." Second time around the local contract passed narrowly.

Now that Jack Welch has said, 'Ideally you'd have every plant you own on a barge,' the Internationals are beginning to wake up.

What happened? Maybe people hadn't been prepared well enough. Maybe they pondered the prospect of a strike and got scared. Maybe the International, which isn't in the habit of supporting strikes, got scared. But by ordering a revote—and presenting no evidence that it had, in fact, been inundated with complaints—the International undermined the local leadership. Now the bitterness in the plant between those who supported Norman and those who didn't is sharp, presenting the fighting side with one more formidable hurdle. Bobby Roberts, head of the International's manufacturing division in Washington, referred questions on Local 2249 to the vice president of the sixth district, Jeremiah O'Connor, who said there was nothing unusual about interference from on high in local votes, and when I tried to press the conversation, said, "I think you're bullshitting, lady," and slammed down the phone.

In situations of mass layoff, every worker is affected. Those out of work or soon to be are suddenly facing an unexpected burden on top of all the familiar ones. Despite a year and a half of threats and announcements to the contrary, GE has now informed the government in writing that technically it "has not shifted production to Mexico" but simply "intends to import from a corporation in Mexico"; thus, the newly jobless are not entitled to training, extended unemployment benefits, relocation and job-search assistance under Title V of the NAFTA Implementation Act. As for the still-employed, those with the most seniority in mothballed production areas are being reassigned to the lines that remain, creating a "bump" that reshuffles hundreds of workers to different jobs—no doubt affecting productivity and perhaps the rate of injuries, already at one a day, according to Vaught. The local is struggling to find its feet: first, to assist those losing their jobs and to counter GE's latest action; then to create some vehicle to repair relations in the plant, improve communication, educate the membership, build power to defend the remaining jobs *before* they're threatened. The militants need to build a base, to take some of the heat off Norman—to transcend, as the labor anthem goes, "the feeble strength of one."

There are building blocks for a labor/community coalition: Jackie Yenna, president of the White River Central Labor Council and an assembly worker at GE, has a formal relationship with the local head of Jobs With Justice, and Norman has been talking with people from JWJ nationally and with GE militants elsewhere. There are bigger dreams of solidarity. "If the Mexicans are going to make our product, at least we ought to help them fight for the same benefits," says Abbott, who was just voted onto the local's executive board. "It's probably pie in the sky to say we could unionize them, but that's what I'd like to see. But, hell, first we've got to organize our own members."

What will it take to match fire with fire at GE, not just in Bloomington but everywhere? Twenty years ago, Jack Welch openly articulated a strategy for taking the company to where it is today. The GE unions never developed a parallel strategy, and 100,000 lost jobs later, most of them still haven't shed their faith in what the AFL-CIO likes to call "high-road capitalism." During the 2000 national contract talks, Robert Thayer, the Machinists' representative on the CBC, was trying to convince the company to agree not to interfere in future unionization drives, arguing that "a contract is a partnership, not a hindrance." To which the company coolly asserted, "GE has never been neutral and doesn't intend to be neutral."

Now that Welch has said, "Ideally you'd have every plant you own on a barge," the Internationals are beginning to wake up to the fact that they need to be truly international, in orientation and method. For the first time the CBC is undertaking longer-range planning for internal education, outside alliances, international solidarity that goes beyond talk. Coordinated action might deter workers from undercutting one another, both at home and overseas; might develop tactical instruments for mutual aid; might, through public campaigns, strike at one of the company's vulnerabilities: its obsession with the "GE brings good things to life" image. Last fall the IUE merged with the Communications Workers of America, one of the few unions with the resources and expressed desire to take on multinational capital. CWA vice president Larry Cohen says, "The next stage of industrial unionism is community-based unionism. We'll build organizations among workers and our allies all over the country and even internationally. And wherever Welch lands his barge, we'll be there to greet him."

It's in places like Bloomington, though, that the long road to solidarity comes clearest into view. Mayor John Fernandez is probably right that the layoffs will not jolt the city financially;

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most of the workers live in small towns in surrounding counties, which will take the hard hit. In Linton, thirty-five miles southwest, a GE motors plant made refugees of 135 workers when it shut down in 1994. Some commute to Bloomington and will soon be on the move again. Amid Linton's empty storefronts and struggling shops, a GE Appliances store sells Bloomington's refrigerators and Louisville's washer-dryers. The saleswoman's husband had worked at GE; he now travels forty-five miles to a job in Terre Haute and refuses to allow any GE products in the house. Ruth Ann Vaught insists, "What we need is a coalition of all the GE unions—and all the unions everywhere in the world, actually—saying, 'This is labor; these are our jobs.'" But unions from Bloomington or Louisville or anywhere else didn't surge to the side of the Linton workers, and for now Vaught and Norman and the rest of 2249's smart, tough fighters will have to invent their own united front—in-plant, in-community, even cross-border. "This is not easy," says Jeff Crosby, who heads the North Shore Labor Council and IUE Local 201, representing GE workers in Lynn, Massachusetts. "We have to move from 'I am my brother's keeper,' to 'An injury to one is an injury to all,' to 'Workers of the world, unite!'"

It's not utopian anymore, either; it's pragmatic. ■

EXCHANGE
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
my NSEP award might actually be a liability. I feared that I would have to constantly defend my decision to take the NSEP. Let the games begin.

ADAM FRANK

PRICE REPLIES

Olympia, Wash.

■ I have nothing to add to historian of anthropology William Peace's astute observations regarding anthropology's need to come to grips with its hidden cold war past. Joseph Carrier's and Adam Frank's letters, however, require some comment.

Joseph Carrier worked so hard to misrepresent my writing that some of what he writes doesn't even make sense. He claims that my mention of Benedict's RAND affiliation, or various anthropologists' Vietnam work, are examples of anthropologists who spied in World War I returning to do so again in "the next war." The next war I referred to was of course World War II, not Vietnam; Benedict was not even in WWI, and RAND didn't exist until 1948. Likewise, Carrier mixes two separate sentences to give the false impression that I accuse Benedict of being a spy.

Carrier claims I lump undercover spies with anthropologists openly working for the government. I don't. I do examine the historical reasons that the American Anthropological Association does not have explicit prohibitions against both espionage and secret research (two different things) and note that the historic reasons the AAA removed its ban on espionage and secret research were linked to the concerns of contract anthropologists working for both public and private agencies.

An old RAND hand like Carrier (co-author of the 1966 RAND counterinsurgency study of factors inducing Viet Cong defections, *Viet Cong Motivations and Morale*) knows that the beauty of RAND is that it is not simply a haven for current and former intelligence folks; it instead hosts a mix of social scientists, policy wonks, number crunchers and others working on classified as well as unrestricted projects. Lots of useful things happen in such a climate, though the "usefulness" of these is not always widely circulated. That anthropologists work on research projects that are kept secret from research subjects (as Ruth Benedict did in the mentioned 1948 study that RAND classified as restricted) does not trouble anthropologists like Carrier, but it should trouble us all.

Adam Frank is simply wrong to claim I implied NSEP recipients are necessarily spies or that they are required to engage in espionage. He is, however, correct in stating that it was due to the concerns and activism of scholars such as myself that bans now exist on NSEP participants conducting espionage while visiting foreign countries—though we were unsuccessful in getting similar bans extending to the period after the grants. It was, of course, this post-grant "payback" period that clearly was the focus of my single sentence regarding the NSEP, and given the central importance of informed consent in ethics codes from Nuremberg to the present, this is not a trifling matter. Let me be clear: My concern with NSEP derives from the inherent conflict it presents to practitioners in a field whose commitment and loyalty must be to those we study—not those who pay our way through graduate school.

I do not know who told Frank that his only mandated payback to NSEP was "posting [his] résumé to the NSEP website." This is clearly not true. The Defense Department states that all grantees must post résumés and seek federal employment at an NSEP-approved national security–oriented agency. Participants are allowed to request that their résumés not be circulated among the CIA, DIA and NSA—though the FBI (with its new offices in Russia, Mexico, Hungary and elsewhere abroad), the State Department and many other agencies that are the soft-core interface of our national security state's apparatus do not appear on this list of off-limits agencies (see http://aed.org/nsep).

Incidentally, just in case Frank was planning not to follow through with the required "good faith effort" to seek national security–related employment upon graduation, he should be forewarned that NSEP's policy states that "recipients are required to reimburse the U.S. Government for the full amount of assistance provided by the NSEP Fellowship, plus interest, should they fail to fulfill the service requirement." True, NSEP fellows can fulfill their payback requirement at US institutions of higher education after their good-faith effort to find employment at NSEP-approved government agencies, but given the job market for anthropologists, anyone counting on repaying NSEP through such an anticipated maneuver is living in denial.

NSEP's commitment to oiling the revolving doors between the academy and the national security state goes against the grain of anthropologist Ralph Beals's sage observation, over thirty years ago, that "the research data obtained for one purpose should not...be used for another without the consent of the individual[s] involved." Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, a specialist in anthropological ethics, notes that anthropologists must describe and disclose "to the people studied, to the best of his or her knowledge, the intent of the research; the methodology by which it is to be carried out; the source of financial support; and the possible outcomes of the research." Under this most basic concept of informed consent, anthropologists receiving NSEP funding must inform those they study that upon their graduation they are required to seek employment from a limited list of national security–related government agencies. But I am sure that Adam Frank has done this in Shanghai and that the University of Texas has required him to do so in compliance with its Human Subject Review Board's policies.

I am glad to see that Frank is outraged that he and other anthropologists can be mistaken as spies. This disturbs me too. I would encourage Frank and other anthropologists to write members of the AAA's Ethics Committee and urge revisions of the AAA's Ethics Code so that it once again explicitly prohibits secret research and espionage. Those we study should not assume we aren't spies unless we at least declare we aren't. I take heart that AAA president Louise Lamphere has shown sincere concern about revelations of past links between anthropologists and intelligence agencies. Two months ago Lamphere devoted a large portion of the AAA's annual business meeting to an examination of historical evidence and ethical implications of past associations between the CIA and the AAA. Who knows, the association may be poised for a reconsideration of its lack of explicit prohibitions on covert research and work for intelligence agencies.

DAVID PRICE

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ECONOMISTS VS. STUDENTS (Continued from Page 6)

It's amusing that our economists rely on "news reports" for information about protests on their own campuses, but that's only the first of their informational challenges. Typically, sit-ins have been a strategy of last resort, used after months of fruitless negotiations with a task force or committee appointed by administrators—bodies that almost always include broad faculty and student representation. Even after sit-ins, decisions have often been made by campus senates elected by faculty and students. Economists may not have been consulted as experts in great numbers (and this letter shows why!), but other social scientists have figured prominently in campus debates. For example, the Worker Rights Consortium (see below) has two sociologists on its advisory council who've extensively studied the apparel industry.

This fudges the distinction between the WRC—founded by students along with workers' organizations, human rights groups and academics—and the FLA, established by the Clinton Administration along with he garment industry. Officials of both monitoring groups were bewildered by the pairing. ACIT's disdain for the FLA places it to the right of Nike, a fan of the organization.

Since most apparel work is done by subcontractors, this really is the relevant point. But it's hardly a consolation that these workers are paid "no less than the prevailing market wage," since that can be pennies an hour. A university-logoed T-shirt retailing for $20 may have netted the workers who made it just 20 cents, a relation that strikes many noneconomists as disturbing.

There's little evidence that higher wages would destroy jobs. US evidence on minimum-wage increases, for example, shows that employers easily absorb higher costs—and the markup on garments is so vast that industry would barely notice. If they did find profits unpleasantly crimped, any price increase would be almost invisible to shoppers, and surveys show they'd happily pay more if they knew workers were getting the benefit.

Dear Sir/Madam:

We, the undersigned, are concerned about the process by which decisions are being taken by some academic institutions in the ongoing Anti-Sweatshop campaign to establish Codes of Conduct to be applied to American firms manufacturing apparel with university/college logos in poor countries and about the choice among agencies appointed to monitor the activities of these firms.

We believe that the decisions on these matters by universities and colleges should be made only after careful research, discussion, and debate in a manner appropriate to informed decision-making. However, we often encounter news reports of sit-ins by groups of students in the offices of university/college administrators, after which decisions are often made without seeking the views of scholars in the social sciences, law, and humanities who have long discussed and researched the issues involved or of a broader campus constituency of fellow students and the entire community of faculty members. Furthermore, little attention has been given to whether the views of the Anti-Sweatshop campaign are representative of the views of the governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), and workers in the poor countries that are directly involved in the manufacture and in the export of apparel and related goods.

We recognize the good intentions of the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) and the Fair Labor Association (FLA), which are the two main anti-sweatshop groups competing for membership commitments by universities and colleges. Both of these groups, however, seem to ignore the well-established fact that multinational corporations (MNCs) commonly pay their workers more on average in comparison to the prevailing market wage for similar workers employed elsewhere in the economy. In cases where subcontracting is involved, workers are generally paid no less than the prevailing market wage. We are concerned therefore that if MNCs are persuaded to pay even more to their apparel workers in response to what the ongoing studies by the anti-sweatshop organizations may conclude are appropriate wage levels, the net result would be shifts in employment that will worsen the collective welfare of the very workers in poor countries who are supposed to be helped. Further information on this and other issues involved in the anti-sweatshop campaign is posted on the ACIT web site.

We are also concerned that the monitoring mechanisms established by both the Worker Rights Consortium and Fair Labor Association may prove uneven and ineffective. Other certifying and monitoring organizations should also be considered, such as the Council on Economic Priorities Accreditation Agency (CEPAA), an international non-government organization with considerable experience in administering a Social Accountability Standard (SA8000). Under SA8000, member companies are required to comply with national and other applicable laws and to respect the principles of worker rights embodied in the pertinent Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In view of the complexity of the broad economic and related issues that the subject of "Social Responsibility" raises, we stress the need for universities and colleges to properly research, debate, discuss, and take decisions on this matter in a manner more appropriate to the fact that they, of all institutions in society, must promote informed decision-making.

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A visit to which (www.spp.umich.edu/rsie/acit) yields this letter, some pro-globalization agitprop, an overheated Op-Ed defending Nike boss Phil Knight and a meager set of links, helpfully sorted into "pro-trade" and "anti-trade" views. Almost no one is against trade—a fact even ACIT feels obliged to acknowledge in a footnote.

Since it's doubtful that the governments of, say, China and Indonesia have the welfare of garment workers close to their hearts, that objection is odd. And activists are in frequent communication with NGOs and workers' organizations in the South; indeed, students established the WRC so there would be a monitoring body that takes its cues from the complaints of workers rather than the PR needs of Nike or the sensibilities of First World consumers.

It may be true that MNCs pay better than other employers in poor countries, but it's hardly a "well-established" fact: There are good data for only a handful of countries, few of them major garment producers. Jeff Ballinger, who's followed Nike around the world for years, files a strong dissent: "Nike contractors in Indonesia were paying at the absolute low end of the wage scale for no-skill, light-manufacturing work. Ditto for Levi, Mattel." Also, focusing just on wages ignores frequently miserable working conditions—heat, fumes, insults, sexual harassment, and physical punishments. And is it fair to compare wages paid by rich MNCs with those paid by often-impoverished local operations?

The "ongoing studies" are probably the WRC's living-wage studies, which attempt to estimate what workers need to get by; eventually the WRC will expect vendors to member schools to pay a living wage, but that long-term goal awaits the results of the research. The FLA's code makes no mention of a living wage. This is one of many issues that differentiate the WRC and FLA, distinctions that elude ACIT.

SA8000 is a high-tech name for yet another code of conduct. Though the letter criticizes the WRC and (inaccurately) the FLA for promoting a living wage, ACIT's pet monitor requires payment of a living wage for plant certification. That aside, "uneven and ineffective" isn't a bad description of its work. Though they supposedly certify only factories where workers are free to organize, over half the factories with the SA8000 seal are in China, not a friendly environment for independent union organizing. A 1999 report by Labour Rights in China, a coalition of Hong Kong NGOs, portrays SA8000 as a PR tool of multinationals, deploying poorly trained auditors to make sporadic and superficial inspections (for which management tends to be well prepared), filing reports that are released to the public only at management's whim. SA8000's inspector in southern China, the Norwegian firm Det Norske Veritas (DNV), recently told the *South China Morning Post* that it may pull out of the scheme because the region is "impossible" to work in. In one SA8000-certified factory, hungry workers fainted on the factory floor after fourteen-hour workdays, in conditions that violated not only the SA8000 standard but China's own labor laws.

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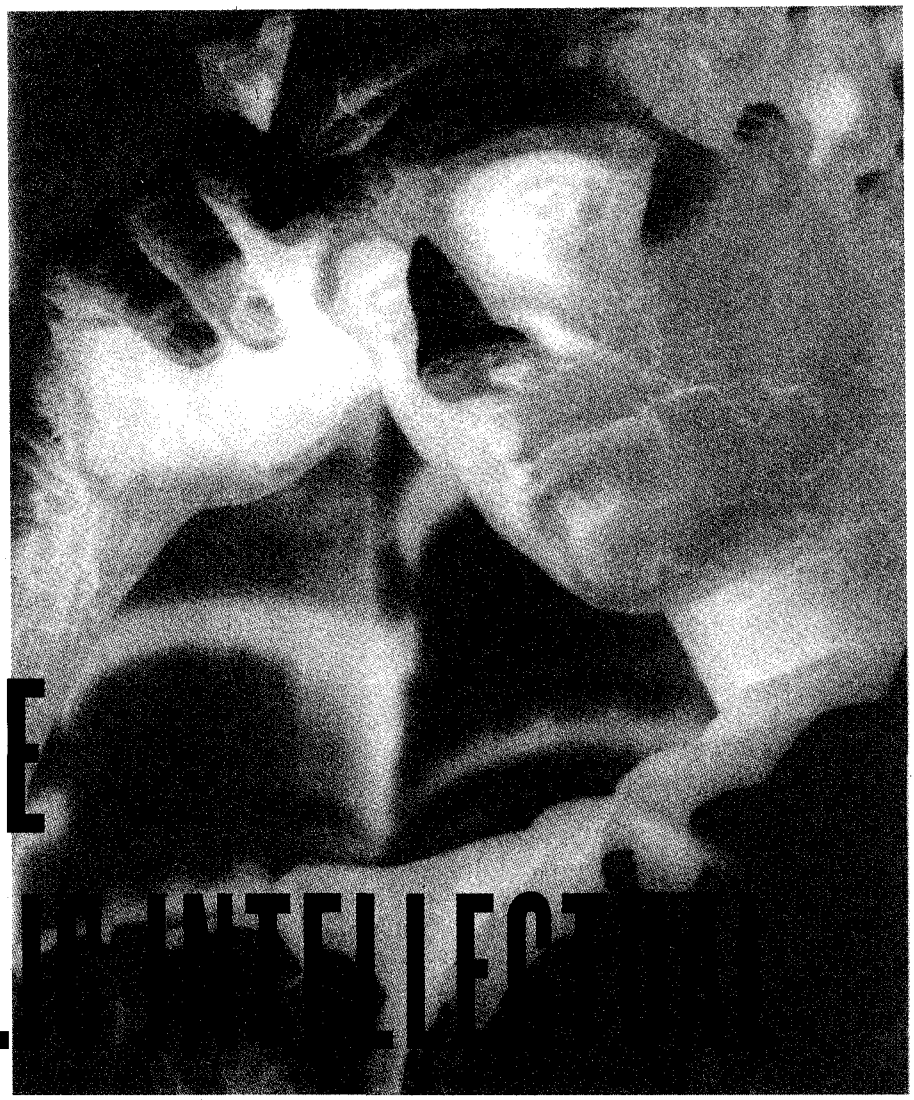
BOOKS & THE ARTS



ERIC PERRY/PHOTONICA

THE FUTURE of the PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

A FORUM

The following debate is adapted from a forum—put together by Basic Books and held in New York City some weeks ago. Participating were: John Donatich, who moderated and is publisher of Basic Books; Russell Jacoby, who teaches at UCLA and is the author of *The End of Utopia* and *The Last Intellectuals*; Jean Bethke Elshtain, who has served as a board member of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton University, is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, teaches at the University of Chicago and is the author of *Women and War*, *Democracy on Trial* and a forthcoming intellectual biography of Jane Addams; Stephen Carter, the William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law at Yale University and author of, among other works, *The Culture of Disbelief*, *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*, *Integrity*, *Civility* and, most recently, *God's Name in Vain: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics*; Herbert Gans, the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology at Columbia University and author of numerous works, including *Popular Culture and High Culture*, *The War Against the Poor* and *The Levittowners*; Steven Johnson, acclaimed as one of the most influential people in cyberworld by *Newsweek* and *New York* magazines, co-founder of *Feedmag.com*, the award-winning online magazine, and author of the books *Interface Culture* and the forthcoming *Emergence*; and Christopher Hitchens, a columnist for *The Nation* and *Vanity Fair*, whose books include the bestselling *No One Left to Lie To: The Values of the Worst Family* and *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*. For Basic, he will be writing the forthcoming *On the Contrary: Letters to a Young Radical*.

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John Donatich: As we try to puzzle out the future of the public intellectual, it's hard not to poke a little fun at ourselves, because the issue is that serious. The very words "future of the public intellectual" seem to have a kind of nostalgia built into them, in that we only worry over the future of something that seems endangered, something we have been privileged to live with and are terrified to bury.

In preparing for this event, I might as well admit that I've been worried about making the slip, "the future of the public ineffectual." But I think that malapropism would be central to what we'll be talking about. It seems to me that there is a central conflict regarding American intellectual work. How does it reconcile itself with the venerable tradition of American anti-intellectualism? What does a country built on headstrong individualism and the myth of self-reliance do with its people convinced that they know best? At Basic Books' fiftieth anniversary, it's a good time to look at a publishing company born in midcentury New York City, a time and place that thrived on the idea of the public intellectual. In our first decades, we published Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Michael Walzer, Christopher Lasch, Herb Gans, Paul Starr, Robert Jay Lifton—and these names came fresh on the heels of Lévi-Strauss, Freud, Erik Erikson and Clifford Geertz.

What did these writers have in common except the self-defined right to worry the world and to believe that there is a symbiotic relationship between the private world of the thinker and the public world he or she wishes to address? That the age of great public intellectuals in America has passed has in fact become a cliché. There are many well-reviewed reasons for this. Scholars and thinkers have retreated to the academy. Self-doubt has become the very compass point of contemporary inquiry. Scholarship seems to start with an autobiographical or confessional orientation. The notion that every question has a noble answer or that there are reliable structures of ideology to believe in wholeheartedly has become, at best, quaint.

Some believe that the once-relied-upon audience of learned readers has disappeared, giving way to a generation desensitized to complex argumentation by television and the Internet. The movie *Dumb and Dumber* grosses dozens of millions of dollars at the box office, while what's left of bohemian culture celebrates free-market economics. Selling out has more to do with ticket grosses than the anti-materialist who stands apart from society.

How do we reconcile ambition and virtue, expertise and accessibility, multicultural sensitivity and the urge toward unified theory? Most important, how do we reconcile the fact that disagreement is a main catalyst of progress? How do we battle the gravitation toward happy consensus that paralyzes our national debate? A new generation of public intellectuals waits to be mobilized. What will it look like? That is what our distinguished panelists will discuss.

Russell Jacoby has been useful in defining the role of the public intellectual in the past half-century, especially in the context of the academy. Can you, Russell, define for us a sort of historical context for the public intellectual—what kind of talent, courage and/or political motivation it takes for someone to be of the academy but to have his or her back turned to it, ready to speak to an audience greater than one's peers?

How do we battle the gravitation toward happy consensus—reconcile the fact that disagreement is a main catalyst of progress?

Russell Jacoby: A book of mine that preceded *The Last Intellectuals* was on the history of psychoanalysis. And one of the things I was struck by when I wrote it was that even though psychoanalysis prospered in the United States, something was missing—that is, the sort of great refugee intellectuals, the Erik Eriksons, the Bruno Bettelheims, the Erich Fromms, were not being reproduced. As a field it prospered, but it became medicalized and professionalized. And I was struck by both the success of this field and the absence of public voices of the Eriksons and Bettelheims and Fromms. And from there I began to consider this as a sort of generational question in American history. Where were the new intellectuals? And I put the stress on *public* intellectuals, because obviously a kind of professional and technical intelligentsia prospered in America, but as far as I could see the public intellectuals were becoming somewhat invisible.

They were invisible because, in some ways, they had become academics, professors locked in the university. And I used a kind of generational account, looking at the 1900s, taking the Edmund Wilsons, the Lewis Mumfords. What became of them, and who were their successors? And I had a tough time finding them.

In some sense it was a story of my generation, the generation that ended up in the university and was more concerned with—well, what?—finding recommendations than with writing public interventions. And to this day, the worst thing you can say about someone in an academic meeting or when you're discussing tenure promotion is, "Oh, his work is kind of journalistic." Meaning, it's readable. It's journalistic, it's superficial. There's an equation between profundity and originality.

My argument was that, in fact, these generations of public intellectuals have diminished over time. For good reasons. The urban habitats, the cheap rents, have disappeared—as well as the jobs themselves. So the transitional generation, the New York intellectuals, ends up in the university. I mention Daniel Bell as a test case. When he was getting tenure, they turned to him and said, "What did you do your dissertation on?" And he said, "I never did a dissertation." And they said, "Oh, we'll call that collection of essays you did a dissertation." But you couldn't do that now. Those of that generation started off as independent intellectuals writing for small magazines and ended up as professors. The next generation started off as professors, wrote differently and thought differently.

So my argument and one of the working titles of my book was, in fact, "The Decline of the Public Intellectuals." And here I am at a panel on "The Future of Public Intellectuals." Even at the time I was writing, some editors said, "Well, decline, that's a little depressing. Could you sort of make a more upbeat version?" So I said, "I have a new book called *The Rise of American Intellectuals*," and was told, "Well, that sounds much better, that's something we can sell." But I was really taking a generational approach, which in fact, is on the decline. And it caused intense controversy, mainly for my contemporaries, who always said, "What about me? I'm a public intellectual. What about my friends?" In some sense the argument is ongoing. I'm happy to be wrong, if there are new public intellectuals emerging. But I tend to think that the university and professionalization does absorb and suck away too much talent, and that there are too few who are bucking the trends.

Donatich: Maybe the term "public intellectual" begs the question, "who is the public that is being addressed by these intellectuals?" Which participant in this conversation is invisible, the public or the intellectual?

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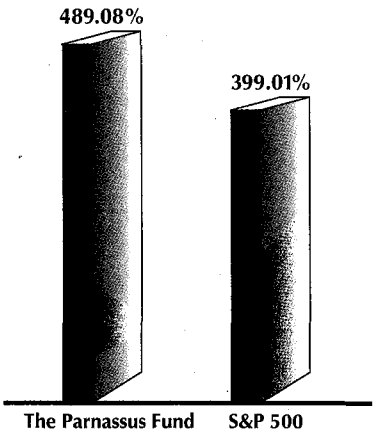

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Jean Bethke Elshtain: I mused in print at one point that the problem with being a public intellectual is that as time goes on, one may become more and more public and less and less intellectual. Perhaps I should have said that a hazard of the vocation of the public intellectual lies in that direction. I didn't exactly mean less academically respectable, but rather something more or less along these lines: less reflective, less inclined to question one's own judgments, less likely to embed a conviction in its appropriate context with all the nuance intact. It is the task of the public intellectual as I understand that vocation to keep the nuances alive. A public intellectual is not a paid publicist, not a spinner, not in the pocket of a narrowly defined purpose. It is, of course the temptation, another one, of the public intellectual to cozy up to that which he or she should be evaluating critically. I think perhaps, too many White House dinners can blunt the edge of criticism.

A way I like to put it is that when you're thinking about models for this activity, you might put it this way: Sartre or Camus? An intellectual who is willing to look the other way, indeed, shamefully, explain away the existence of slave-labor camps, the gulags, in the service of a grand world-historic purpose or, by contrast, an intellectual who told the truth about such atrocities, knowing that he would be denounced, isolated, pronounced an ally of the CIA and capitalistic oppressors out to grind the faces of the poor.

There are times when a public intellectual must say "neither/nor," as did Camus. Neither the socialism of the gallows, in his memorable phrase, nor a capitalist order riddled with inequalities and shamed by the continuing existence, in his era, the era of which I speak, of legally sanctioned segregation. At the same time, this neither/nor did not create a world of moral equivalence. Camus was clear about this. In one regime, one order, one scheme of things, one could protest, one could organize to fight inequities, and in the other one wound up disappeared or dead.

Let me mention just one issue that I took on several times when I alternated a column called "Hard Questions" for *The New Republic*. I'm referring to the question of genetic engineering, genetic enhancement, the race toward a norm of human perfection to be achieved through manipulation of the very stuff of life. How do you deal with an issue like this? Here, it seems to me, the task of the public intellectual in this society at this time—because we're not fighting the issues that were fought in the mid-twentieth century—is to join others in creating a space within which such matters can be articulated publicly and debated critically.

At present, the way the issue is parsed by the media goes like this: The techno-enthusiasts announce that we're one step closer to genetic utopia. The *New York Times* calls up its three biological ethicists to comment. Perhaps one or two religious leaders are asked to wring their hands a little bit—anyone who's really a naysayer with qualms about eugenics, because that is the direction in which we are heading, is called a Luddite. Case closed, and every day we come closer to a society in which, even as we intone multiculturalism as a kind of mantra, we are narrowing the definition of what is normatively human as a biological ideal. That's happening even as we speak; that is, we're in real danger of reducing the person to his or her genotype, but if you say that, you're an alarmist—so that's what I am.

Therapeutic culture and its quivering, sentimental self, and the decline of our political parties, both put the public intellectual at risk.

This leads me to the following question: Who has authority to pronounce on what issue, as the critical issues change from era to era? In our time and place, scientists, technology experts and dot-com millionaires seem to be the automatic authorities on everything. And everybody else is playing catch-up.

So the public intellectual needs, it seems to me, to puncture the myth-makers of any era, including his own, whether it's those who promise that utopia is just around the corner if we see the total victory of free markets worldwide, or communism worldwide or positive genetic enhancement worldwide, or mouse-maneuvering democracy worldwide, or any other run-amok enthusiasm. Public intellectuals, much of the time at least, should be party poopers. Reinhold Niebuhr was one such when he decided that he could no longer hold with his former compatriots of the Social Gospel movement, given what he took to be their dangerous naïveté about the rise of fascism in Europe. He was widely derided as a man who once thought total social transformation in the direction of world peace was possible, but who had become strangely determined to take a walk on the morbid side by reminding Americans of the existence of evil in the world. On this one, Niebuhr was clearly right.

When we're looking around for who should get the blame for the declining complexity of public debate, we tend to round up the usual suspects. Politicians usually get attacked, and the media. Certainly these usual suspects bear some responsibility for the thinning out of the public intellectual debate. But I want to lift up two other candidates here, two trends that put the role of public intellectuals and the very existence of publics in the John Dewey sense at risk. The first is the triumph of the therapeutic culture, with its celebration of a self that views the world solely through the prism of the self, and much of the time a pretty "icky" self at that. It's a quivering sentimental self that gets uncomfortable very quickly, because this self has to feel good about itself all the time. Such selves do not make arguments, they validate one another.

A second factor is the decline of our two great political parties. At one point the parties acted not just as big fundraising machines, not just as entities to mobilize voters but as real institutions of political and civic education. There are lots of reasons why the parties have been transformed and why they no longer play that role, but the results are a decline in civic education, a thinning out of political identification and depoliticization, more generally.

I'm struck by what one wag called the herd of independent minds; by the fact that what too often passes for intellectual discussion is a process of trying to suit up everybody in a team jersey so we know just who should be cheered and who booed. It seems to me that any public intellectual worth his or her salt must resist this sort of thing, even at the risk of making lots of people uncomfortable.

Donatich: Stephen, can you talk about the thinning out of political identity? Who might be responsible for either thickening or thinning the blood of political discourse? What would you say, now that we're talking about the fragmentation of separate constituencies and belief systems, is the role of religion and faith in public life?

Stephen Carter: You know that in the academy the really bad word is "popularizer"— a mere popularizer, not someone who is original, which of course means obscure, or someone who is "deeply theorized," which is the other phrase. And to be deeply theorized, you understand, in academic terms today, means to be incapable of uttering a word such as "poor." No one is poor. The word, the phrase now, as some of you may know, is "restricted access to capital markets." That's deeply theorized,

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you see. And some of us just say poor, and that makes us popularizers.

A few years ago someone who was really quite angry about one of my books—and I have a habit of making people angry when I write books—wrote a review in which he challenged a statement of mine asserting that the intellectual should be in pursuit of truth without regard to whether that leaves members of any particular political movement uncomfortable. He responded that this was a 12-year-old nerd's vision of serious intellectual endeavor.

And ever since then I thought that I would like to write a book, or at least an essay, titled something like *Diary of an Intellectual Nerd*, because I like that idea of being somewhat like a 12-year-old. A certain naïveté, not so much about great ideas and particularly not about political movements but about thought itself, about truth itself. And I think one of the reasons, if the craft of being intellectual in the sense of the scholar who speaks to a large public is in decline, is cynicism. Because there's no sense that there are truths and ideas to be pursued. There are only truths and ideas to be used and crafted and made into their most useful and appropriate form. Everyone is thought to be after something, everyone is thought to have some particular goal in mind, independent of the goal that he or she happens to articulate. And so, a person may write a book or an article and make an argument, and people wonder, they stand up in the audience and they say, "So, are you running for office, or are you looking for some high position?" There's always some thought that you must be after something else.

One of the reasons, ideally, you'd think you would find a lot of serious intellectual endeavor on university campuses is precisely because people have tenure and therefore, in theory, need not worry about trying to do something else. But on many, many campuses you have, in my judgment, relatively little serious intellectual endeavor in the sense of genuinely original thinking, because even there, people are worried about which camp they will be thought to be in.

You can scarcely read a lot of scholarship today without first having to wade through several chapters of laying out the ground in the sense of apologizing in advance to all the constituencies that may be offended, lest one be thought in the other camp. That kind of intellectual activity is not only dangerous, it's unworthy in an important sense, it's not worthy of the great traditions of intellectual thought.

There's a tendency sometimes to have an uneasy equation that there is serious intellectual activity over here, and religion over there, and these are, in some sense, at war. That people of deep faith are plainly anti-intellectual and serious intellectuals are plainly antireligious bigots—they're two very serious stereotypes held by very large numbers of people. I'm quite unembarrassed and enthusiastic about identifying myself as a Christian and also as an intellectual, and I don't think there's any necessary war between those two, although I must say, being in an academic environment, it's very easy to think that there is.

I was asked by a journalist a few years ago why was it that I was comfortable identifying myself, and often did, as a black scholar or an African-American scholar and hardly ever identified myself as a Christian scholar. And surely the reason is, there are certain prejudices on campus suggesting that is not a possible thing to be or, at least, not a particularly useful combination of labels.

And yet, I think that the tradition of the contribution to a public-intellectual life by those making explicitly religious arguments has been an important and overlooked one, and I go back for my model, well past Niebuhr, into the nineteenth century. For example, if you looked at some of the great preachers of the abolitionist movement, one thing that is quite striking about them is, of course, that they were speaking in an era when it was commonly assumed that people could be quite weighty in their theology and quite weighty in their intellectual power. And when you read many of the sermons of that era, many of the books and pamphlets, you quickly gain a sense of the intellectual power of those who were pressing their public arguments in explicitly Christian terms.

Nowadays we have a historical tendency to think, "Oh, well, it's natural they spoke that way then, because the nation was less religiously diverse and more Christian." Actually, the opposite was probably true, as historians now think—the nation is probably less religiously diverse now than it was 150, 175 years ago, when religions were being founded really quite swiftly. And most of those swiftly founded religions in the 1820s to the 1830s have died, but many of them had followers in great number before they did.

America's sense of itself as a so-called Christian nation, as they used to say in the nineteenth century, didn't really grow strong until the 1850s or 1860s. So you have to imagine the abolitionist preachers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, preaching in a world in which it

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could be anything but certain that those who were listening to them were necessarily co-religionists.

In this century too, we have great intellectual preachers who also spoke across religious lines. Martin Luther King is perhaps the most famous of them, even though sometimes, people try to make a straitjacket intellectual of him by insisting, with no evidence whatsoever, that he actually was simply making secular moral arguments, and that religion was kind of a smokescreen. If you study his public ministry and look at his speeches, which were really sermons, as a group, you easily discern that that's not true.

And yet, the religiosity of his language gave it part of its power, including the power to cross denominational lines, to cross the lines between one tradition and another, and to cross lines between religion and nonreligion. For the religiously moved public intellectual, the fact is that there are some arguments that simply lose their power or are drained of their passion when they're translated into a merely secular mode. The greatness of King's public oratory was largely a result of its religiosity and its ability to touch that place in the human heart where we know right from wrong; it would not have been as powerful, as compelling, had it lacked that religious quality.

Now, I'm not being ahistorical, I'm not saying, "Oh, therefore the civil rights movement would not have happened or we would still have racial segregation today"—that's not the point of my argument. The point is that his religiosity did not detract from his intellectual power; rather, it enhanced it. This is not to say, of course, that everyone who makes a religious argument in public life is speaking from some powerful intellectual base. But it does suggest we should be wary of the prejudices that assume they can't be making serious arguments until they are translated into some other form that some may find more palatable. In fact, one of my great fears about the place we are in our democracy is that, religion aside, we have lost the ability to express and argue about great ideas.

Donatich: Professor Carter has made a career out of illustrating the effect and protecting the right of religious conviction in public thought. Herbert Gans, on the other hand, is a self-pronounced, enthusiastic atheist. As a social scientist who has taught several generations of students, how does a public intellectual balance the professional need for abstract theory and yet remain relevant, contribute some practical utility to the public discourse?

Herbert Gans: I'm so old that the word "discourse" hadn't been invented yet! I am struck by the pessimism of this panel. But I also notice that most of the names of past public intellectuals—and I knew some of them—were, during their lifetime, people who said, "Nobody's listening to me." Erich Fromm, for example, whom I knew only slightly and through his colleagues, was sitting in Mexico fighting with psychoanalysts who didn't think politics belonged in the dialogue. Lewis Mumford was a teacher of mine, and he certainly felt isolated from the public, except on architecture, because he worked for *The New Yorker*.

So it seems to me it's just the opposite: that the public intellectual is alive and well, though perhaps few are of the magnitude of the names mentioned. If I did a study, I'd have to define what an intellectual is, and I notice nobody on the panel has taken that one on. And I won't either. The public intellectuals that exist now may not be as famous, but in fact there are lots of them. And I think at least on my campus, public intellectuals are becoming celebrities. Some of them throw stones and get themselves in trouble for a few minutes and then it passes. But I think that really is happening, and if celebrities can exist, their numbers will increase.

One of the reasons the number is increasing is that public intellectuals are really pundits. They're the pundits of the educated classes, the pundits of the highbrow and the upper-middlebrow populations, if you will. And the moment you say they're pundits, then you can start comparing them to other pundits, of which we have lots. And there are middlebrow pundits and there are lower-brow pundits, there are serious pundits, there are not-so-serious pundits.

Some of the columnists in the newspapers and the tabloid press who are not journalists with a PhD are public intellectuals. There are pundits who are satirical commentators, there are a significant number of people who get their political news from Leno and Letterman. And, of course, the pollsters don't really understand this, because what Leno and Letterman supply is a satirical take on the news.

Most public intellectuals function as quote-suppliers to legitimize the media. Two or three times a week, I get called by journalists and asked whether I will deliver myself of a sociological quote to accompany his or her article, to legitimate, in a sense, the generalizations that journalists make and have to make, because they've got two-hour deadlines. Which means that while there are few public intellectuals who are self-selected, most of us get selected anyway. You know, if no journalist calls for a quote, then I'm not a public intellectual; I just sit there writing my books and teaching classes.

I did a book on the news media and hung out at *Newsweek* and the other magazines. And at *Newsweek*, they had something they called an island, right in the main editorial room. On the island were names of people who would now be called public intellectuals, the people whom *Newsweek* quoted. And the rules were—and this is a bit like *Survivor*—every so often people would be kicked off the island. Because the editors thought, and probably rightly, that we as readers were going to get tired of this group of public intellectuals. So a new group was brought in to provide the quotes. And then *they* were kicked off.

The public intellectuals come in two types, however. First there are the ones that everyone has been talking about, the generalists, the pundits, as I think of them; and second are the disciplinary public intellectuals. The public sociologists, the public economists, the public humanists—public, plus a discipline. And these are the people who apply the ideas from their own disciplines to a general topic. And again, to some extent, this is what I do when I'm a quote-supplier, and I'm sure my fellow panelists are all functioning as quote-suppliers too.

But the disciplinary public intellectuals show that their disciplinary insights and their skills can add something original to the public debate. That, in other words, social scientists and humanists can indeed

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grapple with the issues and the problems of the real world. The disciplinary public intellectuals, like other public intellectuals, have to write in clear English. This is a rarity in the academy, unfortunately—which makes disciplinary public intellectuals especially useful. And they demonstrate the public usefulness of their disciplines, which is important in one sense, because we all live off public funds, directly or indirectly, and we need to be able to account every so often that we're doing something useful for taxpayers. I cannot imagine there are very many legislators in this country who would consider an article in an academic journal as proof that we're doing something useful or proof that we're entitled to some share of the public budget.

Disciplinary public intellectuals are useful in another way, too: They are beloved by their employers, because they get these employers publicity. My university has a professionally run clipping service, and every time Columbia University is mentioned, somebody clips and files the story. And so every time somebody quotes me I say, "Be sure to mention Columbia University," because I want to make my employers happy, even though I do have tenure. Because, if they get publicity, they think they're getting prestige, and if they get prestige, that may help them get students or grant money.

There are a number of hypotheses on this; I'm not sure any of them are true—whether quote-supplying provides prestige, or prestige helps to get good students, whether good students help to get grant money. There is a spiral here that may crash. But meanwhile, they think that if we're getting them publicity, we're being useful. And, of course, public social scientists and those in the humanities are, in some respects, in short supply, in part because their colleagues stigmatize them as popularizers. (They don't call them journalists, which is a dirty word in the ivory tower.)

It's also fair to say that in the newsrooms, "academic" is a dirty word. If you've ever paid attention, journalists always cite "the professor," and it doesn't matter who it is, and it doesn't even matter if they're friends of the professor. But it's always "the professor," which is a marvelous way of dehumanizing us professors. So there's this love/hate relationship between journalists and academics that's at work here. All of which means, yes, of course, it does take a bit of courage to be a public intellectual or a disciplinary public intellectual. If you turn your back on the mainstream of the academy, that's the way you get a knife in your back, at times.

Donatich: Steven Johnson has used the web and Internet energetically and metaphorically. How will the Internet change public dialogue? What are the opportunities of public conversation that this new world presents?

Steven Johnson: One of the problems with the dot-com-millionaire phenomenon—which may, in fact, be starting to fall behind us—is that it really distracted a huge amount of attention from a lot of other very interesting and maybe more laudable things that were happening online. There was kind of a news vacuum that sucked everything toward stories about the 25-year-old guy who just made $50 million, and we lost sight of some of the other really progressive and important things that were happening because of the rise of the web.

I'm of a generation that came of age at precisely that point that Russell Jacoby talked about and wrote about, during the late eighties, when the academy was very much dominated by ideas from France and other places, where there was a lot of jargon and specialization, and it was the heyday of poststructuralism and deconstruction in the humanities. Which leads me to sometimes jokingly, sometimes not, describe myself as a "recovering semiotics major."

I think that I came to the web and to starting *Feed*, and to writing the book that I wrote about the Internet culture and interface culture, as a kind of a refugee from conversations like one in the academy, when I was a graduate student, in which a classmate asked the visiting Derrida a ten- or fifteen-minute, convoluted Derridean question on his work and the very possibility of even asking a question. And after a long pause, Derrida had to admit, "I'm sorry, I do not understand the question."

The web gave me an unlikely kind of home in that there were ideas and there were new critical paradigms that had been opened up to me from the academic world. But it was clear that you couldn't write about that world, you couldn't write using those tools with that kind of language and do anything useful. And it was very hard to imagine a life within the university system that was not going to inevitably push me toward conversations like that with Derrida.

So the good news, I think, is that my experience is not unique. In fact, there's been a great renaissance in the last five years of the kind of free-floating intellectual that had long been rumored to be on his or her last legs. It's a group shaped by ideas that have come out of the academy but is not limited to that. And I think in terms of publications like *Feed*—to pat myself on the

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back—*Hermenaut* and *Suck* are all good examples of a lively new form of public intellectualism that is not academic in tone.

The sensibility of that group is very freethinking—not particularly interested in doctrinaire political views, very eclectic in taste, very interested in the mix of high and low culture, much more conversational in tone—funny, even. Funny is an interesting component here. I mean, these new writers are funny in a way, you know, Adorno was never very funny. And they're very attentive to technology changes, maybe as interested in technology and changes in the medium as they are in intellectual fashions. If there's a role model that really stands out, it's somebody like Walter Benjamin for this generation. You know, a sense of an interest that puts together groups of things you wouldn't necessarily expect to see put together in the same essay.

How does the web figure into all of this? Why did these people show up on the web? I think one of the things that started happening—actually, this is just starting to happen—is that in addition to these new publications, you're starting to see something on the web that is very unique to it. The ability to center your intellectual life in all of its different appearances in your own "presence" online, on the home page, so that you can actually have the equivalent of an author bio. Except that it's dynamically updated all the time, and there are links to everything you're doing everywhere. I think we've only just begun to exploit it—of combating the problem with the free-floating intellectual, which is that you're floating all over the place and you don't necessarily have a home, and your ideas are appearing in lots of different venues and speaking to lots of different audiences.

The web gives you a way of rounding all those diverse kinds of experiences and ideas—and linking to them. Because, of course, the web is finally all about linking—in a way that I think nothing has done quite as well before it. And it also involves a commitment to real engagement with your audience that perhaps public intellectuals have talked a lot about in the past, but maybe not lived up to as much as they could have.

Some of this is found in the new formats that are available online in terms of how public dialogue can happen. I'm sure many of you have read these and many of you may have actually participated in them, but I'm a great advocate for this kind of long-format, multiparticipant discussion thread that goes on over two or three weeks. Not a real-time live chat, which is a disaster in terms of quality of discourse, which inevitably devolves into the "What are you wearing" kind of intellectual questions. But rather, the conversations with four or five people where each person has a day or half a day to think up their responses, and then write in 500- to 1,000-word posts. We've done those since we started at *Feed. Slate* does a wonderful job with them. And it's a fantastic forum. It's very engaged, it's very responsible, it's very dialogic and yet also lively in a conversational way. But, because of the back and forth, you actually can get to places that you sometimes couldn't get in a stand-alone 10,000-word essay.

The web may solve one problem of the free-floating intellectual—for the home page is about linking up and engaging a public.

Donatich: Professor Gans, if you had trouble with the word "discourse," I'm wondering what you'll do with "dialogic."

Johnson: I said I was recovering! That's the kind of thing that should be happening, and it seems to me that in five or ten years we'll see more and more of people who are in this kind of space, having pages that are devoted to themselves and carrying on these conversations all the time with people who are coming by and engaging with them. And I think that is certainly a force for good. The other side is just the economics of being able to publish either your own work or a small magazine. I mean, we started *Feed* with two people. We were two people for two years before we started growing a little bit. And the story that I always tell about those early days is that we put out the magazine and invited a lot of our friends and some people we just knew professionally to contribute. About three months, I guess, after *Feed* launched, *Wired* came out with a review of it. And they had this one slightly snippy line that said, "It's good to see the East Coast literary establishment finally get online." Which is very funny, to be publishing this thing out of our respective apartments. I had this moment where I was looking around my bedroom for the East Coast literary establishment—you open the closet door, and "Oh, Norman Mailer is in there. 'Hey, how's it going!'" And so there can be a kind of Potemkin Village quality online. But I think the village is thriving right now.

Donatich: Christopher Hitchens, short of taking on what a public intellectual might or might not be, will you say something about the manners or even the mannerisms of the public intellectual and why disagreement is important to our progress?

Christopher Hitchens: I've increasingly become convinced that in order to be any kind of a public-intellectual commentator or combatant, one has to be unafraid of the charges of elitism. One has to have, actually, more and more contempt for public opinion and for the way in which it's constructed and aggregated, and polled and played back and manufactured and manipulated. If only because all these processes are actually undertaken by the elite and leave us all, finally, voting in the passive voice and believing that we're using our own opinions or concepts when in fact they have been imposed upon us.

I think that "populism" has become probably the main tactical discourse, if you will, the main tactical weapon, the main vernacular of elitism. Certainly the most successful elitist in American culture now, American politics particularly, is the most successful inventor or manipulator, or leader of populism. And I think that does leave a great deal of room in the public square for intellectuals to stand up, who are not afraid to be thought of as, say, snobbish, to pick a word at random. Certainly at a time when the precious term "irony"—precious to me, at any rate—has been reduced to a form of anomie or sarcasm. A little bit of snobbery, a little bit of discrimination, to use another word that's fallen into disrepute, is very much in order. And I'm grateful to Professor Carter for this much, at least, that he drew attention to language. And particularly to be aware of euphemism. After all, this is a time when if you can be told you're a healer, you've probably won the highest cultural award the society can offer, where anything that can be said to be unifying is better than anything that can be described as divisive. Blush if you will, ladies and gentlemen, I'm sure at times you too have applauded some hack who says he's against or she's against the politics of division. As if politics wasn't division by definition.

The *New York Times*, which I'm sure some of you at least get, if you don't read, will regularly regale you in this way—check and see if you can confirm this. This will be in a news story, by the way, not a news analysis. About my hometown in Washington, for example, "recently there was an unpleasant outbreak of partisanship on Capitol Hill, but order seems to have

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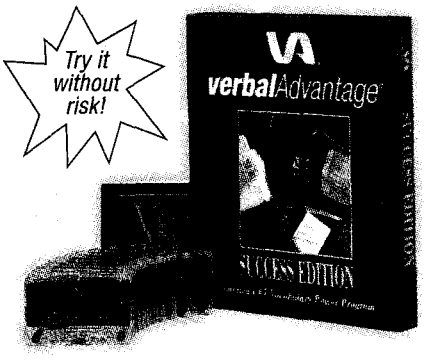

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been restored, and common sense, and bipartisanship, is again regained. I've paraphrased only slightly. Well, what is this in translation? "For a while back there it looked as if there'd be a two-party system. But, thank God, the one-party system has kicked back in."

Now, the *New York Times* would indignantly repudiate—I'm coming back to this, actually—the idea that it stood for a one-party system or mentality, but so it does. And its language reveals it. So look to the language. And that is, in fact, one of the most essential jobs of anyone describing themselves as an intellectual.

Against this, we have, of course, the special place reserved for the person who doesn't terribly want to be a part of it, doesn't feel all that bipartisan, who isn't in an inclusive mood. Look at the terms that are used for this kind of a person: gadfly, maverick and, sometimes, bad boy. Also bad girl, but quite often bad boy, for some reason. Loose cannon, contrarian, angry young man.

These are not hate words, by any means, nor are they exactly insulting, but there's no question, is there, that they are fantastically and essentially condescending. They're patronizing terms. They are telling us, affectionately enough, that pluralism, of course, is big enough, capacious enough, tolerant enough to have room for its critics.

The great consensus, after all, probably needs a few jesters here and there, and they can and should be patted upon the head, unless they become actually inconvenient or awkward or, worst of all—the accusation I have myself been most eager to avoid—humorless. One must be funny, wouldn't you say? Look to the language again. Take the emaciated and paltry manner and prose in which a very tentative challenge to the one-party system, or if you prefer, the two-party one, has been received. I'm alluding to the campaign by Ralph Nader.

The *New York Times* published two long editorials, lead editorials, very neatly inverting the usual Voltairean cliché. These editorials say: We don't particularly disagree with what Ralph Nader says, but we violently disagree with his right to say it. I've read the editorials—you can look them up. I've held them up to the light, looked at them upside down, inside out, backwards—that's what they say. This guy has no right to be running, because the electorate is entitled to a clear choice between the two people we told you were the candidates in the first place.

I find this absolutely extraordinary. When you're told you must pick one of the available ones; "We've got you some candidates, what more do you want? We got you two, so you have a choice. Each of them has got some issues. We've got some issues for you as well. You've got to pick." A few people say, "Well, I don't feel like it, and what choice did I have in the choice?" You're told, "Consider the alternatives." The first usage of that phrase, as far as I know, was by George Bernard Shaw, when asked what he felt like on his 90th birthday. And he said, "Considering the alternatives...." You can see the relevance of it. But in this case you're being told, in effect, that it would be death to consider the alternatives.

It would be a sad thing if the word 'intellectual' lost its sense that there was something malcontent about the individual in question.

Now, to "consider the alternatives" might be a definition of the critical mind or the alive intelligence. That's what the alive intelligence and the critical mind exist to do: to consider, tease out and find alternatives. It's a very striking fact about the current degeneration of language, that that very term, those very words are used in order to prevent, to negate, consideration of alternatives. So, be aware. Fight it every day, when you read gunk in the paper, when you hear it from your professors, from your teachers, from your pundits. Develop that kind of resistance.

The word "intellectual" is of uncertain provenance, but there's no question when it became a word in public use. It was a term of abuse used by those who thought that Capt. Alfred Dreyfus was guilty in 1898 to describe those who thought that he was probably innocent. It was a word used particularly by those who said that whether Captain Dreyfus was innocent or not, that wasn't really the point. The point was, would France remain an orderly, Christian, organic, loyal society? Compared to that, the guilt or innocence of Captain Dreyfus was irrelevant. They weren't saying he was necessarily guilty, they were saying, "Those who say he is innocent are not our friends. These are people who are rootless, who have no faith, who are unsound, in effect." I don't think it should ever probably lose that connotation. And fortunately, like a lot of other words that were originally insults—I could stipulate "Impressionist," which was originally a term of abuse, or "suffragette" or "Tory," as well as a number of other such terms—there was a tendency to adopt them in reaction to the abuse and to boast of them, and say, "Well, all right, you call me a suffragette, I'll be a suffragette. As a matter of fact, I'll be an Impressionist."

I think it would be a very sad thing if the word "intellectual" lost its sense that there was something basically malcontent, unsound and untrustworthy about the person who was claiming the high honor of the title. In politics, the public is the agora, not the academy. The public element is the struggle for opinion. It's certainly not the party system or any other form whereby loyalty can be claimed of you or you can be conscripted.

I would propose for the moment two tasks for the public intellectual, and these, again, would involve a confrontation with our slipshod use of language. The first, I think, in direct opposition to Professor Carter, is to replace the rubbishy and discredited notions of faith with scrutiny, by looking for a new language that can bring us up to the point where we can discuss shattering new discoveries about, first, the cosmos, in the work of Stephen Hawking, and the discoveries of the Hubble telescope—the external world—and, second, no less shattering, the discovery about our human, internal nature that has begun to be revealed to us by the unraveling of the chains of DNA.

At last, it's at least thinkable that we might have a sense of where we are, in what I *won't* call creation. And what our real nature is. And what do we do? We have President Clinton and the other figures in the Human Genome Project appear before us on the day that the DNA string was finally traced out to its end, and we're told in their voices and particularly the wonderful lip-biting voice of the President, "Now we have the dictionary which God used when he was inventing us." Nothing could be more pathetic than that. This is a time when one page, one paragraph, of Hawking is more awe-inspiring, to say nothing of being more instructive, than the whole of Genesis and the whole of Ezekiel. Yet we're still used to babble. For example, in the *18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, Karl Marx says, quite rightly, I think, "When people are trying to learn a new language, it's natural for them to translate it back into the one they already know." Yes, that's true. But they must also transcend the one they already know.

So I think the onus is on us to find a language that moves us beyond faith, because faith is the negation of the intellect, faith supplies belief in preference to inquiry and belief, in place of skepticism, in place of

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the dialectic, in favor of the disorder and anxiety and struggle that is required in order to claim that the mind has any place in these things at all.

I would say that because the intellectual has some responsibility, so to speak, for those who have no voice, that a very high task to adopt now would be to set oneself and to attempt to set others, utterly and contemptuously and critically and furiously, against the now almost daily practice in the United States of human sacrifice. By which I mean, the sacrifice, the immolation of men and women on death row in the system of capital punishment. Something that has become an international as well as a national disgrace. Something that shames and besmirches the entire United States, something that is performed by the professionalized elite in the name of an assumed public opinion. In other words, something that melds the worst of elitism and the absolute foulest of populism.

People used to say, until quite recently, using the words of Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*, the play that gave us the patronizing term "angry young man"—well, "there are no good, brave causes anymore." There's nothing really worth witnessing or worth fighting for, or getting angry, or being boring, or being humorless about. I disagree and am quite ready to be angry and boring and humorless. These are exactly the sacrifices that I think ought to be exacted from oneself. Let nobody say there are no great tasks and high issues to be confronted. The real question will be whether we can spread the word so that arguments and debates like this need not be held just in settings like these but would be the common property of anyone with an inquiring mind. And then, we would be able to look at each other and ourselves and say, "Well, then perhaps the intellectual is no longer an elitist." ■

Publishers Caught in a Web

GAYLE FELDMAN

BOOK BUSINESS: Publishing Past Present and Future.
By Jason Epstein. Norton. 188 pp. $21.95.

Jason Epstein's *Book Business: Publishing Past Present and Future* is the third memoir of a major American life in book publishing to reach print in less than two years. It is at once a sign that the guard is changing and a recognition that the business has already changed. It is also, in the case of the 72-year-old Epstein, an opportunity to gaze into the crystal ball to predict the changes to be, something he has been rather good at during the course of his long career.

Simon & Schuster's Michael Korda got the triumvirate rolling in 1999 with *Another Life*, gossipy and entertaining and novelistic, like the books Korda often publishes. The New Press's André Schiffrin—famously ousted from Random House's Pantheon Books, the once independent imprint his father started—followed suit more recently with *The Business of Books*, the kind of polemic he has sometimes featured on his list [see Daniel Simon, "Keepers of the Word," December 25, 2000].

It's not surprising, then, that the tone pervading Epstein's memoir—which began with a series of lectures he gave at the New York Public Library, formed two essays in *The New York Review of Books* and was coaxed into a book by Norton president Drake McFeely—is cool and elegant and full of the gravitas of a man who wanted to be a great writer and instead ended up publishing many such, Morrison and Mailer and Doctorow among them.

He arrived at Random House in 1958, having deemed it time to leave Doubleday when he was prevented from publishing *Lolita* there. While at Doubleday he had founded Anchor Books and with it the trade paperback format in America. He retired as Random's editorial director in 1998, and during the four decades in between started the Library of America, a unified series of reprints of great American literature; The Reader's Catalog, a kind of print precursor to Amazon; and *The New York Review of Books*. He had a reputation as a brilliant editor but went beyond that to envisage change and make it happen, and in the process made himself into a pillar of the New York intellectual establishment.

"If I have any regrets, I can't think what they are," he declared during an interview recently, sipping homemade espresso at his large kitchen table in an opulent downtown apartment that could double as the upscale set for one of Woody Allen's Manhattan tales. He still edits authors he's been associated with but now does it from home. He prefers to be based there rather than in the Random corporate offices, wishes to put space between himself and an "increasingly distressed industry" mired in "severe structural problems." Prominent among them are a chain-driven bookselling system that favors "brand name" authors and often returns other new books to their publishers after only a few weeks on the shelves, before the titles have a chance to establish themselves; and a bestseller-driven system of high royalty advances that often do not earn back the money invested, a system that ratchets up unrealistically high sales expectations for new titles overall, and in so doing makes it increasingly difficult to publish certain kinds of books.

One-third of the way through his slim text, Epstein writes that his career has demonstrated an "ambivalence toward innovation." Ambivalence also pervades this elegiac book. Perhaps it is inevitable when a man looks back to his youth and forward to a future in which he will not play a major part, even if he is hopeful about that future. Perhaps, too, it is inevitable when confronting the distress signals of an industry he has spent his life in and clearly loves. Epstein shares his visions of a publishing future liberated electronically, but that future harks back to a deep-seated nostalgia, a longing for what was. His book seems to predict that technology in the form of the Internet will restore to the book business a certain lost rightness from the past.

His first chapter, like Dickens's Christmas tale, moves back and forth among past, present and future in an attempt to limn the larger changes of the past fifty years and what may yet unfold. The rest of the book is chronologically structured. It follows Epstein's career and the transformation of publishing from primarily small-scale, owner-operated enterprises rooted in the 1920s "golden age" of Liveright and Knopf to the "media empires" of today, which are forced to operate within an "overconcentrated," "undifferentiated" and fatally "rigid" bookselling structure. Now, he says, "there can't be Liverights or Cerfs because the context is so different. Roger Straus is the very last of them," and even he has sold his company to the German firm von Holtzbrinck.

Publishing must return to being "a much smaller business again," Epstein is con-

Gayle Feldman, a contributing editor at Publishers Weekly, *is New York correspondent for* The Bookseller *of London.*

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vinced. "It has to, it's a craft and can't be industrialized any more than writing can. It's about to undergo a huge structural shift and there's nothing the conglomerates can do about it. The marketplace has shifted out from under them: the system of big money bestsellers defeats the possibility of building a sustained backlist. And without a sustained backlist, publishing cannot function in the long term. Providentially, just as the industry was falling into terminal decadence, electronic publishing has come along."

Epstein is in no way predicting the demise of print. Rather, his future is predicated on a kind of universal electronic Reader's Catalog, "much like Amazon" but far beyond it, "multilingual, multinational, and responsibly annotated. People will access it on their computers at home, in the office, and in kiosks like ATMs. It will be possible to browse those books, and downloading technology will eventually solve the problem of making it possible to buy those books. They won't exist in print until they're actually bought.

"There is no room on the Internet for middlemen, who sell the same product as their competitors, competing on the basis of price and service, and in so doing eat up their margins." Epstein is of course speaking of the Amazons and B&N.coms of today. "I think Amazon can't be here that much longer," says the man who sat at this same kitchen table doling out advice to its CEO, Jeff Bezos, a few years back.

As for brick-and-mortar stores, "the chains aren't tenable, either. They never were. The superstores have become what the old mall stores were. There are far too many of them, Waldens with coffee bars, and they will shrink. Stores run by people who love running bookstores will arise spontaneously like mushrooms and find a way to stay in business once the chains begin to recede."

And the conglomerate publishers? "I think they can show some financial progress for some years by cutting costs and cutting out redundancies, but eventually they'll find themselves with expensive traditional facilities that are increasingly irrelevant. They'll have to offload many functions on to specialist firms. In the end, they in turn will look for a buyer if they can find one. They should have noticed that the previous owners were all too happy to sell."

Meanwhile, authors will have found a way to bypass their publishers by going directly to the web. People will start independent authors' websites. Books will be much cheaper. Authors will have a much larger share of the revenue.

Stephen King has already gained notoriety in trying to do so. But the spectacular starting bang of *Riding the Bullet*, done in conjunction with his publisher, Simon & Schuster, attenuated when he tried to serialize online a novel, *The Plant*, on his own. A downturn in paying customers for the later chapters led King to abandon the project. Asked about this, Epstein insists, "It's like the days of the early cars that ran off the road into the mud. People said cars would never work. Well, one of these days e-publishing will work."

Publishing 'is about to undergo a huge structural shift and there's nothing the conglomerates can do about it,' maintains Epstein.

Of other experiments now being tried Epstein is openly dismissive, and he sees a kind of Darwinian process filtering chaff from grain. Mighty Words and similar online publishers "don't know what a book is," he contends. "But people know what a book is. Human beings are designed to distinguish value, and in my opinion that problem will take care of itself."

He disregards the tremors that have gone through the publishing houses ever since B&N.com announced it was getting into the business of publishing books. Barnes & Noble Digital was formed the first week in January to compete with the new electronic subsidiaries of traditional publishers, which are bringing out digital versions of new titles readable on PCs or dedicated devices, as well as original works specifically created for electronic distribution. In addition, they are digitizing backlist and out-of-print books that can be reprinted in very small quantities in a process known as print-on-demand. "It's yet another premature entry," says Epstein. "B&N's publishing experience is limited to a remainder operation. That's entirely different from bringing out original works."

While Epstein criticizes the proverbial naysayers' laughing at those early cars stuck in the mud, at the same time he cautions, "I don't think an author who has worked hard to create something of value will want to risk it in the electronic format at this point." He says bookstores will wind up selling new titles at much lower prices than is now the case, $10 or so, but "can't figure out" how that will be done in the black. His predictions are compelling, but they are also much too vague—for instance, he sets out no time frame or actual mechanics for what he believes will transpire.

The bloat of the superstores is something publishers have worried about for years, almost from their rollout. This holiday season's flat sales at the three biggest chains; the margin-slashing of Amazon; and the re-energizing of the independent stores through a marketing program called Booksense, which includes web-based retailing, all serve to illustrate Epstein's points. Borders went so far as to put itself on the block, but found no willing takers. Recent murmurs about B&N's CEO Len Riggio entertaining a buyout offer from media conglomerate Gemstar–TV Guide International, which has aggressively entered the e-book technology market, did not result in a deal but also were more than simple gossip.

The past twenty years have seen the RCAs, MCAs, Advance Publications and the like learn their lessons and abandon book publishing, as Epstein has noted. Other conglomerates have already tried to offload their publishing components and in time will try again. But it also can't be ignored that companies like the German-based Bertelsmann (which acquired Bantam, Doubleday Dell and Random House and consolidated them) and von Holtzbrinck (which has bought Holt, St. Martin's and Farrar, Straus & Giroux) have their roots in the book business itself. They are therefore not as likely to exit the scene as Epstein would have us believe.

Undoubtedly, many of Epstein's electronic dreams are prescient and will one day come to pass. The companies that first turn them into reality, though, will likely be turning out works in the professional, scholarly, reference and educational sectors rather than in the trade world he knows so well. But although the Internet will change book publishing profoundly and in ways even Jason Epstein can't predict, other forces are at work as well and shouldn't be ignored.

A couple of years ago a brilliant and rich entrepreneur who also happens to be a profoundly bookish man devised a model, not unlike Epstein's nostalgic vision, of devolved companies publishing real books that share a central financial source. It is called the Perseus Group. It is still in its early days, far too soon to know whether it will last. But Epstein's longing for a more civilized, human-scale publishing business is shared by many. The Internet may help bring it about, but it won't do everything. ■

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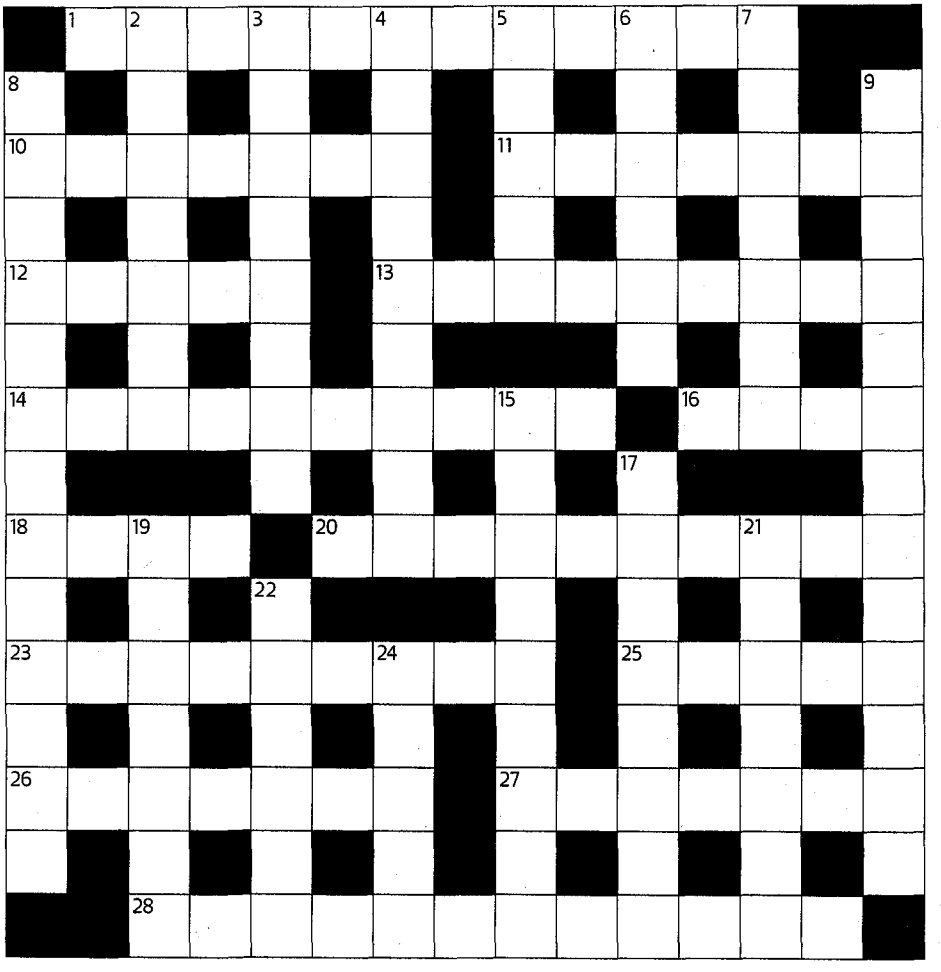

ACROSS

1 Let the far-left types out of prison—they're capable of rapid chain reactions! (4,8)

10 Not by which the air comes out, but one might first write a paper this way. (7)

11 A Refor9mation bishop brings back the genuine stuff with German in it, likewise. (7)

12 The most important part of the matter is earthshaking! (5)

13 Certainly not an unusual piece of legislation sometimes applied to marriage. (6,3)

14 One who can take on a job with almost any body. (10)

16 and **18** Fishboats you may pay to get out of? (3,5)

20 An almost classic description is a moon-starer. (10)

23 What a beggar is likely to be doing if one has little spirit to behold and joins the circle. (9)

25 What the traveler may pay for a ring made of a natural material. (5)

26 Certain bones have an Oriental sign like many Oriental types. (7)

27 The sign of a hug and a kiss comes to a dead end but might be the salt of the earth. (7)

28 What might contain the downfall makes small attacks on old-fashioned "bad little boys." (12)

DOWN

2 and **19** He thought one of his characters was an improvement on himself. (7,7)

3 Those who take "a little extra" might be found at the Home for Retired Thespians. (8)

4 Car parked next to carts that have been upset. Do such have power? Absolutely! (9)

5 The mail's sorted—having letters from a religious collective. (5)

6 Part of the play has one on with what some want plenty of! (6)

7 A sort of 5 holds nothing with a final place in Africa. (7)

8 Finding yourself having no place to park Dobbin, but that's the way things go, one hopes! (7,1,5)

9 Make a comparison by penciling in one that has a certain amount of latitude? (4,1,8)

15 Pretty awful, commonly—i.e., our eggs get broken by it. (9)

17 A shower of rain, as of this, perhaps would find you hunting something. (2,6)

19 See 2

21 The sound of a cow having a temper tantrum when tied up with it? (7)

22 A spy inside, by the way, to cause a lot of bother! (6)

24 The goodnight girl who shows some anger at getting only half the news? (5)

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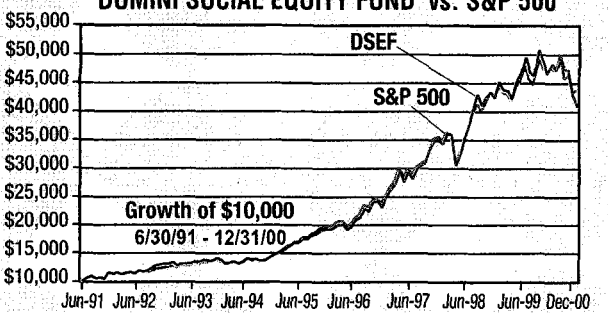

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